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# Blair urged to axe post of Lord Chancellor

By Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

A call for the Prime Minister to axe the post of Lord Chancellor was made by more than 50 Labour MPs last night.

In a humiliating snub to the gaffe-prone Lord Irvine of Lairg, the motion urged Tony Blair to take advantage of the proposed reform of the House of Lords with a review of the executive role of the Lord Chancellor.

Sponsored by Robert Marshall-Andrews QC, Labour MP for Medway, the motion suggested "that role being undertaken by a Secretary of State for Justice within a Department of Justice, answerable directly to the House of Commons".

That would exclude Lord Irvine, who was appointed directly to the job in the Lords by his former legal pupil, Mr Blair.

The implicit criticism of Lord Irvine's conduct as Lord Chancellor - often seen as out-of-touch, if not high-handed and arrogant - is the more damaging because the motion has been signed by a number of new MPs who are not regarded as "usual suspect" trouble-makers.

They include Rhodri Morgan, who chairs the all-party Public Administration Select Committee, which recently called Lord Irvine to give evidence; David Hinchliffe, chairman of the Health Select Committee; Rosie Winterton, who was in aide to John Prescott in Opposition; and Charlotte Atkins, a former parliamentary officer with Unison.

While the attacks on Lord Irvine have been coming thick and fast over recent weeks, there is a strong suspicion among senior Government colleagues that much of the media attention was instigated by his suggestion that there would need to be some kind of privacy law.

The Prime Minister has made it clear that he will not have a privacy law of any kind, underlining the political innocence of the Lord Chancellor, but there is no question of Mr Blair sacrificing somebody he regards as a first-class minister.

ments in the Lords - last night's motion makes the more telling political point, that an unelected peer should not have so much power in a democracy.

In addition to his role as the most senior figure in the justice system, Lord Irvine also chairs a significant number of Cabinet committees, and is known to have upset a number of Cabinet colleagues by attempting to impose his views.

*The Independent* reported only last week that as chairman of the Future Legislation Committee, Lord Irvine had objected to a Bill to strengthen the regulatory system for the privatised public utilities, arguing that it was not a political priority.

That is known to have angered the Treasury and the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Bill will be in next autumn's Queen's Speech programme for the coming year.

However, Lord Irvine is also thought to have crossed swords with Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, over "empire-building" plans to create his own Ministry of Justice, at Home Office expense, and it is that notion that appears to have fuelled last night's backlash from the Commons.

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## MP accused of polluting water supply

THE water supply from a farm owned by a Tory MP became contaminated when thousands of gallons of waste water were discharged in a field, a court heard today.

Michael Colvin, 65, MP for Romsey, Hampshire, and farm foreman Ian Hewish, 54, deny causing farm effluent to enter the water supply, which supplies 32 properties, on Home Farm at Tangleigh, near Andover.

The offence carries a maximum fine of £20,000 or three months imprisonment.

Magistrates at Alton, Hampshire, were told that 200,000 gallons of waste water were discharged, polluting ground water at a bore hole on the 85-acre farm.

Hugh Davies, prosecuting for the Environment Agency, said: "There was a concentrated discharge of waste water over a period of 36

hours in a site around the bore hole, which led down at some speed to the bore hole and polluted the ground water."

Mr Davies told the court the incident occurred over December 5 and 6 1995 and is a result of pipes had to be used.

On New Year's Day some of the standpipes froze and it was necessary to divert the Southern Water emergency supply to the bore hole.

Residents were given a Recommendation to Boil notice from January 1 to February 17.

Environment Agency officers

who visited the 180-acre farm, owned by the MP since 1967, found evidence of slurry having been spread from a pipe about 200 metres from the bore hole.

When interviewed, Mr Colvin said he thought it was safe to deposit dirty water on adjoining fields.

He believed the present system was adequate and he had not been prepared to carry the cost of irrigation or spreading machinery.

Ground Water Protection Officer Robert Barnes told the court he had found a fissure within chalk through which the water could have passed quickly into the ground water.

The hearing was adjourned until tomorrow.

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# Put your mortgage and savings together without having to move your current account.

**Wheat farmer, Dennis Ford switches to a mortgage with a combination of features that puts him in clover.**



Dennis Ford, a farmer from Wiltshire, recently switched to a new Bank of Scotland Personal Choice Mortgage. By combining his savings with the mortgage, he's reaping a huge saving in the interest he's paying on his mortgage.

Combining your mortgage with your savings? That might sound like an unusual concept, but consider it for a moment and you'll realise what perfect sense it makes.

#### Higher interest on borrowings than savings

Most of us have come to accept the fact that we pay a higher rate of interest on our borrowings than we receive for our savings.

At the moment, for example, the standard variable mortgage rate is substantially higher than what you're likely to be earning on your savings in a building society. You may then even have to pay tax on the interest on those savings.

#### Save money by paying less interest

Quite simply, Personal Choice is designed to make the difference between the lending and savings rates work in your favour. It's effectively a savings account that pays the same rate of interest as your mortgage.

Working on the principle that

it is more cost effective for you to pay off debt than to save money, it follows that you will be making the most of your savings by using them to reduce the interest you pay on your mortgage.

#### You don't have to move your current account

As this kind of mortgage offers

- Make the very most of your savings.
- Personalised Cheque Book allowing Instant Access.
- No need to pay tax on your savings interest.
- You don't have to move your current account.
- Enjoy a more flexible mortgage with payment holidays of up to six months.
- Options to overpay and underpay\*.
- Variable rate of 8.69% (9.1% typical APR).
- Provisional approval within minutes.
- Free remortgage package\*\* to cover solicitor's and valuation fees.

The charges referred to are estimates. All lending is subject to approval by the Bank on the applicant's status and valuation of the property. Full details and a written consumer credit quotation are available from Bank of Scotland Mortgages Direct, PO Box 1200, Edinburgh EH12 9DX. The Bank requires security over the property and house building insurance for reinstatement value. An acceptable life assurance policy is also required. No record or advance charges are permitted. To apply for a loan or mortgage you must be aged 18 or over. Bank of Scotland is a Representative only of STANDARD LIFE, which is regulated by the Personal Investments Authority, for life insurance, pensions and unit trust business. Typical example: A Personal Choice 140,000 Interest Only Mortgage over 25 years, on property valued at £100,000 would have an annual interest rate of 8.69% (9.1% typical APR 9.1% and 300 gross monthly payments of £434.50 (not monthly payments of £401.01). MTRAS calculated under current tax legislation and may alter, is available on the first £100,000 of the mortgage only. At the end of 25 years £100,000 is payable. The total amount payable is £190,000 (this includes 1% for Valuation Fees and 1% Legal Fees for the taking of security). The cost of any life policies has not been included in the typical example. Rates correct at date of printout and are subject to variation. The cheque book is not available on a mortgage of £15,001 or less. \*Provided the Bank's Panel Solicitor is used. Bank of Scotland, Bank of Scotland Mortgages Direct and 'SC' are registered trademarks of The Governor and Company of the Bank of Scotland. \*\*The option to underpay, overpay, take payment holidays, release equity from your property are all available within a pre-set limit. Telephone calls may be recorded for security purposes and may be monitored under the Bank's quality control procedures. Bank of Scotland subscribes to The Banking Code (1997) and adheres to The Code of Mortgage Lending Practice.

**YOUR HOME IS AT RISK IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON A MORTGAGE OR OTHER LOAN SECURED ON IT.**

such a significant advantage, many banks that offer a similar product insist that you move your current account in along with your mortgage and savings. Not us.

At Bank of Scotland, we appreciate you may prefer to keep your current account and salary arrangements separate, and so with our Personal Choice Mortgage we help you to keep your finances simple by combining just your mortgage and savings accounts.

#### Flexible mortgage

Even the prospect of combining just your savings with your mortgage might sound a touch complicated. But as long as the mortgage is flexible enough to give you access to your savings when you need them, in practice, there isn't much of a difference from the way you've always done things:

Except, of course, you'll have more money. Much more, as Dennis Ford has found to his surprise.

#### Instant Access

As Dennis discovered when he had to buy new machinery quickly, the Personal Choice Mortgage gives you instant access to your savings, making it far more flexible than many traditional savings accounts.

"This mortgage is so brilliant, why did no one think of it before?" insists Dennis. "It's so unbelievably simple, and it's reassuring to know I'm making the most of my savings."

So, how exactly does the Personal Choice Mortgage work? As we've explained, the basic principle is that your savings are used to reduce the interest you pay on your mortgage.

#### Maximise your savings

When you pay in additional lump sum payments of £500 or more interest is recalculated on the reduced mortgage balance so you make immediate interest savings. Even with regular monthly

overpayments, the balance on which interest is calculated is reduced at the end of each month. You can then access those funds any time you like by using a cheque book which is provided.

With no notice period or interest penalties, this is just as easy as withdrawing money from your old savings account. You will have exactly the same security from your savings as you would have with them in a separate account.

#### No tax on savings interest

If you don't need to withdraw the money, then it stays in the account working harder than ever. But, unlike a conventional savings account, you won't have to pay tax on the interest.

A Personal Choice Mortgage also gives you the flexibility to choose how much you pay monthly as a regular mortgage payment. You can opt to pay more each month or less when you need to.

#### A mortgage with payment holidays

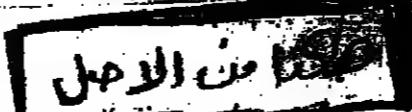
You can even choose to take a payment holiday of up to six months\* or, alternatively, pay over 10 months, instead of 12 each year, giving you the chance to keep a better control over your finances at difficult times of the year such as Christmas or when you splash out for your holidays.

Put all the features together, and you have a fantastic mortgage that's sure to help Dennis make hay all the year round.

IND/113



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## Hopes of end to news price war

By Rob Brown  
Media Editor

A GLIMMER of hope that the Government may take action to end the newspaper price war emerged yesterday when the Office of Fair Trading indicated that it is taking seriously the fresh complaint levelled against Rupert Murdoch's News International by rival publishers.

The director general of fair trading, John Bridgeman, has written to *The Independent*, the *Daily Telegraph*, and the *Guardian* to request further information in support of their claim that the pricing policy of the *Times* is predatory. On the basis of such information he will decide whether a new Ofti inquiry should be opened.

Mr Bridgeman said: "In the past we have dismissed other claims of predatory pricing but the issue continues to cause concern."

This is the second promising sign for publishers who claim that Mr Murdoch is bent on dominating the British broadsheet market through relentless price-cutting. Last month Labour peers defied the Government by joining a cross-party alliance in the Lords calling for an amendment in the new Competition Bill to deal specifically with newspapers.



Woman in black Julia Lee, 29, who last night was set to become the first woman to referee the Oxford v. Cambridge rugby league fixture. She said: 'Doing the Varsity match is a huge honour'

Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

## Wealth fails to buy a passport to literacy

By Ben Russell  
Education Correspondent

MANY people in the most affluent parts of Britain cannot read properly or deal with the simplest sums, according to the most detailed survey of basic skills produced in Britain.

Even in Richmond in west London or Farnham in Surrey, 10 per cent of people could not correctly answer simple reading questions; a quarter could not deal with basic maths, the Basic Skills Agency said. In the worst areas, like Tower Hamlets in London and Knowsley in Liverpool, 25 per cent have trouble reading and between 40 and 50 per cent could not deal with simple mathematical problems.

Sir Claus Moser, the agency chairman, condemned the situation as a "double scandal for a civilised country". He said: "Somewhere between 15 and 20 per cent of adults have very low levels of literacy; that is in the order of 6 million to 8 million adults."

"It's an enormous barrier to economic success and an enormous barrier to social inclusion. The figures are bad enough in themselves but they exclude people who cannot read or

write at all, so the estimates are on the conservative side."

A council-by-council breakdown produced by the agency shows the worst problems in London, the North-west and the North-east. But even across Middle England up to a third of people needed help with basic maths and up to 13 per cent needed help with reading. The breakdown, the first of its kind, was based on a survey of 8,000 people aged between 16 and 60.

They were given simple reading tests, such as finding a 24-hour plumber from the Yellow Pages, understanding a simple letter or recognising the words "fragile - handle with care" on the side of a box. The maths test included adding up the cost of a loaf of bread and two tins of soup, reading a train timetable and working out the floor area of a room.

Mr Wells said: "Even if the strategy in primary schools works it will take several years.

For those who have already left junior school they will be marooned as the parade moves by. If we are going to improve the capacity of adults in the community and reduce the number struggling we will have to have some comprehensive and challenging targets."

Mr Wells said people with poor English and maths spent

five times longer on the dole as people with average skills. He said: "I know of people who always say they have forgotten their glasses when required to read something, or pretend to have their arm bandaged when they are supposed to write something down."

The survey backs government plans to promote the Three Rs in schools and colleges. The Green Paper on lifelong learning, published last month, proposed doubling to 500,000 the number of people offered help with basic skills each year. Key skills are also a central feature of the Government's New Deal for long-term unemployed. Ministers are also planning basic-skills summer schools for adults before the start of the national year of reading in September.

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### Councils with the best and worst levels of reading and writing

\* The 10 councils with the highest numbers of people with poor levels of literacy are (%):

Tower Hamlets	24.4
Knowsley	22.3
Newham	21.8
Barking and Dagenham	21.6
Hackney	21.5
Leicester	21.0
Southwark	20.9
Corby	20.8
Sandwell	20.7
Liverpool	20.5

\* The 10 local authorities with the lowest numbers of people with poor literacy scores are:

Hart (Hampshire)	9.0
Wokingham	9.1
South Cambridgeshire	9.6
Uttlesford	9.7
Surrey Heath	9.7
South Bucks	9.7
Tandridge	9.8
Mole Valley	9.8
Waverley	9.8
Chiltern	9.9

Figures relate to the percentage of people with low or very low levels of literacy.

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**OUTLAWS**  
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2 ACADEMY AWARDS  
1 BEST ACTOR  
1 BEST SCREENPLAY

17 CINEMAS NATIONWIDE FROM MARCH 1998

## Train watchdog acts over missed connections

By Randeep Ramesh  
Transport Correspondent

RAILWAY companies may be forced to hold connecting services for passengers under plans being considered by the rail regulator.

John Swift QC acted after concerns were raised with his office by consumer watchdogs who say that the present performance regime, which penalises companies that let their trains run late, means rail firms put profit before passengers.

The current system, say some experts, gives companies no reason to be concerned about passengers once they have deposited them at a stop.

Keith Webb, a director at the regulator's office, said: "What we are looking for is that train operating companies look beyond their narrow interests for network benefits."

A review of the fines system and connections will be launched in the next few weeks. New powers may see train operators' contracts being modified so that connections become part of the guaranteed minimum service passengers are entitled to.

The performance of some

parts of the rail network has infuriated travellers. In the South West, the worst lines, according to the Rail Users' Consultative Committee, are the Swindon to Gloucester trip and the journey from Exeter to Barnstaple. On the latter, passengers from London use the Great Western service to get to Swindon and often see the connecting Wales and West train leaving the station face a three-hour wait.

In its annual report, the Welsh passenger watchdog, said that there were "inadequate" provisions for connections and that catering for them was "unacceptably omitted".

Critics of privatisation seized on the regulator's actions as evidence that the train companies are failing to deliver. "There is nothing more frustrating for passengers than seeing their connection pull out of the station just as the train they are on arrives. Yet on our 'Balkanised' rail network it happens all the time," said Jonathan Bray, campaigns director for Save Our Railways.

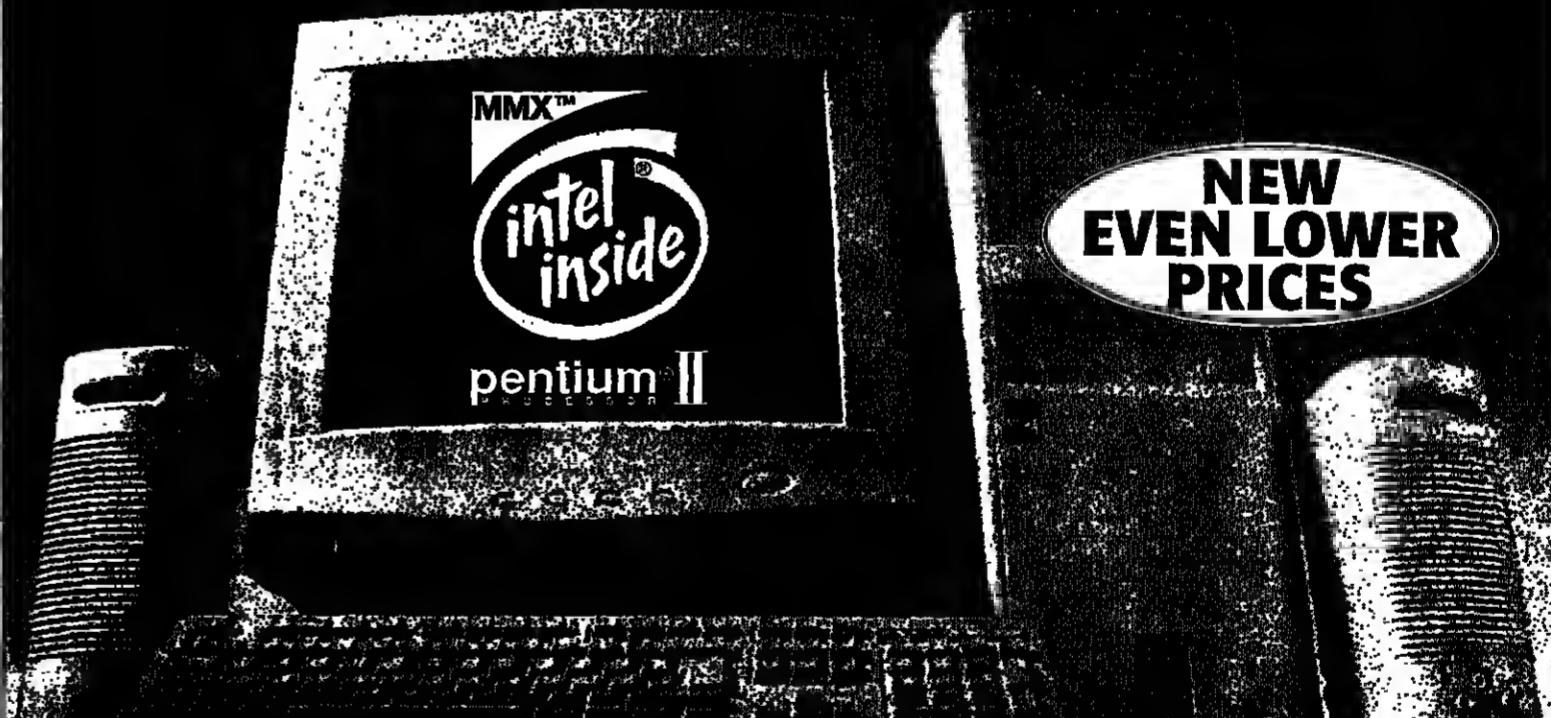
A spokesman for the Association of Train Operating Companies (Atoc), which represents the passenger parts of the private railways, said many firms rely on connecting services for passengers. David Campbell-Bannerman, a director with Atoc, said: "On Virgin's Cross-Country service more than 40 per cent of passengers originated from another company."

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■ CARDIFF ■ LIVERPOOL ■ PLYMOUTH ■ PORTSMOUTH ■ TONBRIDGE  
■ CHARTHAM ■ LEICESTER ■ ROTHERHAM ■ STOKE-ON-TRENT ■ WAKEFIELD  
■ COVENTRY ■ LONDON AREA ■ RIBBLETON ■ WILMSLOW  
■ DERBY ■ LINCOLN ■ POKESMOUTH ■ STOKE-ON-TRENT ■ WILMSLOW  
■ DONCASTER ■ LIVERPOOL ■ POOLE ■ TUNBRIDGE WELLS ■ WIRRAL

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PC WORLD  
THE COMPUTER SUPERSTORE





## Revealed: secret of how to help smokers quit

By Jeremy Lauance  
Health Editor

THE BEST advertisements at getting smokers to give up the habit are those that depict the tobacco industry as deceitful and manipulative, according to a study.

Suggesting tobacco industry executives are dishonest and will go to any lengths to hook new smokers is the most effective way of persuading people to stop buying cigarettes.

The findings, published today in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, follow claims that British American Tobacco misrepresented the findings of a World Health Organisation study by suggesting it showed no increased risk of cancer from passive smoking.

Yesterday, Tessa Jowell, the public health minister, round-ed its claim that passive smoking was safe. Speaking at a launch for tomorrow's No Smoking Day, Ms Jowell said: "BAT have a vested interest in keeping people smoking. They have to replace the 120,000

people a year who die from smoking with new customers. As the authors of the study made clear, it was grossly misrepresented by the tobacco industry who had their own particular spin to put on it."

Researchers at the University of California in San Francisco, who reviewed studies of the effectiveness of anti-smoking advertising, say the image of the tobacco industry in the public mind is key to the continued legitimacy of smoking.

They say: "The type and target of anti-tobacco advertising messages matter. Its strategy demonises smoking and delegitimises the tobacco industry. By showing to what lengths the industry will go to recruit and keep new smokers, these advertisements have sparked interest in smoking and opened people's minds to other anti-tobacco messages."

An anti-smoking campaign run in California which denigrated the tobacco industry led to a 12.2 per cent drop in smoking in the 12 months from April 1990 to March 1991. The researchers say the campaign di-

rectly influenced 33,000 smokers who gave up and contributed to the decision to quit made by a further 173,000.

They say that advertisements which focus on health effects of smoking, or suggest it can lead to romantic rejection, have little impact.

The health service is doing too little to help people stop smoking, the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination at the University of York says.

The centre, set up with government funding to advise on best clinical practice, says doctors and other health professionals should systematically identify patients who smoke and urge them to stop.

## Company drivers sleep at the wheel

By Randeep Ramesh  
Transport Correspondent

COMPANY car drivers are frequently falling asleep at the wheel, according to a survey launched yesterday.

Almost a quarter have felt drowsy or have nodded off, while 18 per cent said stress "affected" their driving.

The survey by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) also found that 17 per cent of those who drive for a living are concerned about the safety implications of the hours they spend on the road.

Despite the revelations, motoring organisations gave the findings only a qualified welcome.

"We should get this into perspective. Company car drivers are no less safe than other motorists, they just drive longer," said an RAC spokesman.

However, many experts support the study. "People forget how stressful driving can be. After all if you work in a factory for long hours and become unsafe, your employer is required to take you off the job. But get into a car and nobody bothers," said Jim Horne, who runs the sleep laboratory at Loughborough University.

RoSPA believes that people

### Dicing with death

There is, roughly, one death per 15 million car trips in the UK. Here are seven activities that also lead, on average, to one death, in order of danger:

Two million cigarettes smoked per death from lung cancer  
Three million acts of unprotected sex per death from Aids  
Four million bicycle riders per cyclist killed  
10 million flights on a jet aircraft per passenger fatality  
25 million beer steaks eaten per death from CJD  
30 million walks in the rain per death by lightning  
75 million trains boarded per train-crash death

driving as part of their job are likely to be linked with more than a quarter of Britain's 3,600 annual road fatalities.

"Accident rates among fleet vehicle users have been estimated to be 30-40 per cent higher than among private car users, but driver training can reduce accident rates by almost twice that amount," said RoSPA occupational safety adviser Roger Bibbings.

The findings come as RoSPA publishes a Managing Occupational Road Risk guidance booklet.

### DAILY POEM

#### From A to B and Back Again

By Michael Hofmann

The Northern Line had come out into the open, was leaving tracks like a curving cicatrice. There was Barnet, my glacial stop, trying hard to live up to its name, colloquial and harmless and trite.

The place was sunny and congested, brick and green trim, it had the one-of-everything-and-two-butchers of a provincial town. First, I dropped into the maternity hospital by accident ...

The porter was an analphabetic, but together we found your name, down among the Os, and there you were, my brave love, in a low hospital gown that covered nothing pale; on an empty drip; and eager to show me your scars, a couple of tidy crosses like grappling hooks, one in the metropolis, the other some distance away, in the unconcerned suburbs.

Our Daily Poems until Friday come from Penguin Modern Poets 13 (Penguin, £7.99), which will be the last volume in this influential series. It contains a selection from the work of Michael Hofmann, Michael Longley and Robin Robertson, chosen by the poets themselves.

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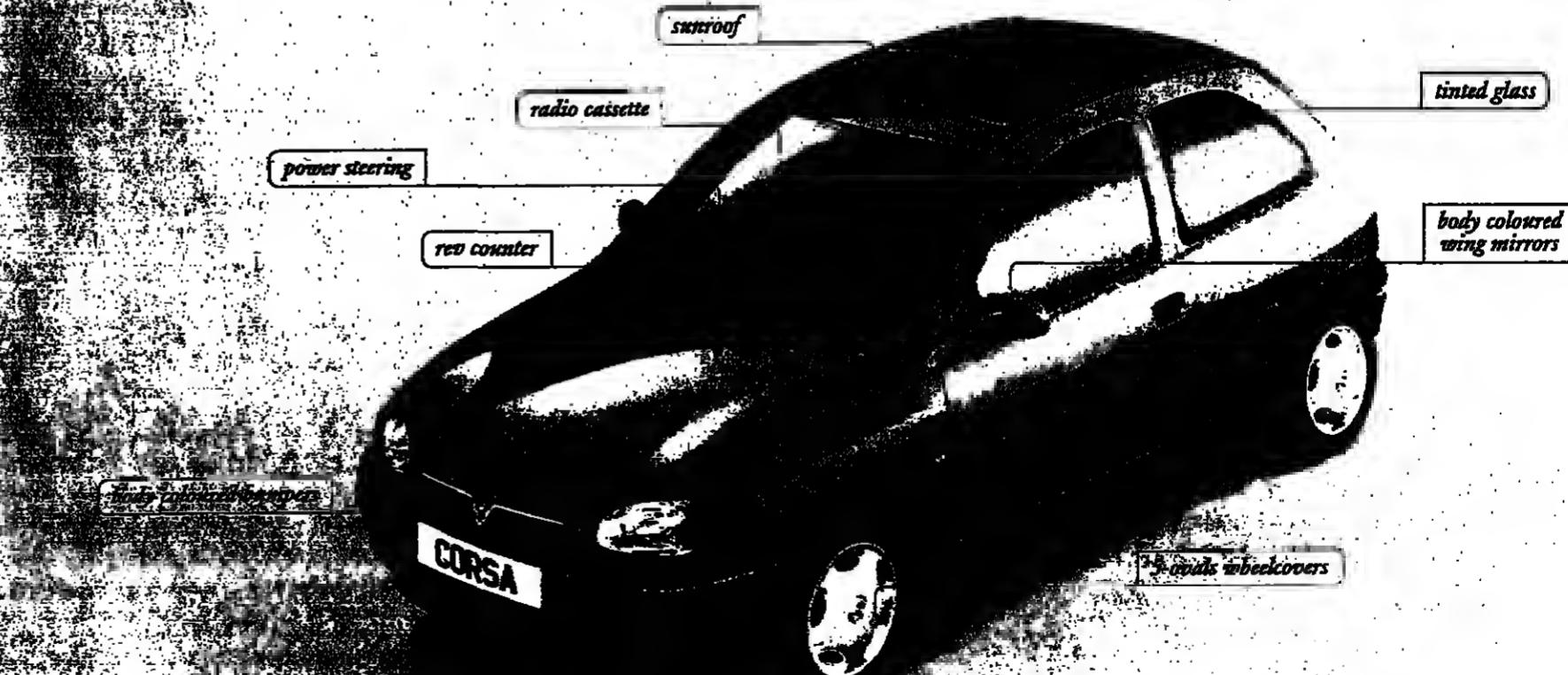
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Walking heads: Models Jane Spencer, right, and Larissa Ivanova bring a touch of colour to the streets of central London yesterday at a fashion shoot to raise funds for the NCH Action for Children charity. The hats are the creations of royal milliner Frederick Fox. Photographic John Stillwell

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# Council tax rise is double the rate of inflation

By David Walker

ALTHOUGH council tax is set to rise next month by double the rate of inflation, increases are less than they would have been had councils not made considerable savings on their 1998-99 budgets, some of them involving painful cuts in social-care programmes, libraries and repairs.

The 8.5 per cent average - 12 per cent in Wales - also reflects the determination of Labour councillors not to embarrass the Blair regime. In London and the

metropolitan districts, councillors have made a special effort to keep taxes down because 1998 is an election year. Long-suffering council tax payers in Lambeth will see the council - where no single party has overall control - cut tax by just over 1 per cent. Next door, Terry controlled Wandsworth is going further, chopping the tax by one-quarter.

Changes in grant distribution have hit the shire counties hard, especially those in the Midlands and South-east. In the shires, where council tax is levied and

collected by the districts, rises will average 11 per cent.

The average increase of 8.5 per cent adds £60 to the tax payable on a band D property, bringing the total payment to £748. But the averages conceal some large cash outlays for householders. Although council tax increased by only 5.5 per cent in the city, Liverpool residents in band D properties will be paying more than £1,100 for the services of a council which, despite efforts to improve, still scores badly on tests of municipal effi-

cacy. The council said most homes were in the lower bands and many householders were on benefits and so paid nothing. Another council formerly considered far to the left, Hack-

ney in east London, is this year asking its council tax payers for zero extra compared with 1997-98 - and this is despite a 20 plus per cent increase in the amount the borough has to collect on

behalf of the Metropolitan Police. Labour Party factions are currently struggling for control in the borough.

The Government was busy yesterday rebutting the charge that it had discriminated against rural areas. Local government minister Nick Raynsford asserted that the distribution of grants was fair; they were working within a budget he believed

set by the Tories.

He added that the Government was reviewing the basis of local government finance

council tax everywhere we wouldn't have local government, just administration of central government services," he added.

The Tories, true to form, claimed that Conservative councils were more careful with taxpayers' money. The Tory environment spokesman, Sir Norman Fowler, said that the average Conservative council tax in 1998-9 would be £615 for occupants of band D properties, while the Labour average in 1997-98 was already more than £740.

## Ex-councillors 'out to get Prescott'

By Colin Brown  
Chief Political Correspondent

EX-LABOUR councillors motivated by "personal disappointment" were last night blamed by party officials for the "vendetta" against John Prescott, undermining the Deputy Prime Minister in his Hull constituency.

Mr Prescott was given the backing of local party officials, after going public about a campaign which has subjected him and his family to months of anguish.

Mr Prescott had not named those he believed were involved in a "shadowy campaign" against him. But Andrew Sharp, regional secretary of the party in North Yorkshire, which covers Hull, said: "I must make it clear that many of the allegations that have been made by councillors and former councillors seem to be based on little more than personal disappointment at not being selected as a candidate in council elections."

He said the police were investigating other reports which included break-ins, malicious telephone calls, and evidence that two journalists had been raking through Mr Prescott's

refuse bins at his home in Hull for information.

Mr Sharp rejected allegations by one of the three deselected Hull Labour councillors, Terry Geraghty, that claims of corruption had not been investigated properly by the party. Mr Geraghty said: "It's just a smokescreen to cover up what has been happening in the city. I don't think there's a vendetta. I've never heard of a vendetta."

"Quite honestly, when politicians stoop to this sort of accusation they are either trying to cover up or they're not living in the real world."

Mr Geraghty was one of the three Labour councillors who were suspended by the party last year and had appeals rejected. They have been barred from standing for the party for the May elections.

The *Independent* disclosed on Monday that Mr Prescott believed he was the target for a smear campaign, which included a raid on his refuse bins at his family house in Hull.

Mr Prescott yesterday said his family was paying "an unacceptable price" for the vendetta being waged against him.

Direct action: A policewoman buying a T-shirt from a member of a disabled pressure group in Westminster yesterday, when about 1,200 people, hundreds of them in wheelchairs, lobbied Parliament to voice their anger and fears over benefit cuts

Photograph: Andrew Bufton

## Bug-buster appointed to head millennium task force

By Anthony Bevins  
Political Editor

A WOMAN engineer was yesterday appointed Britain's official millennium bug-buster.

Gwyneth Flower is to be full-time director of Action 2000, the government-sponsored organisation which has the task of mobilising business to face up to the threat of the year 2000 computer crisis.

Because thousands of computers, and millions of computer programmes, work on two-digit years, the year 2000 will be represented by 00 - and many machines will falsely read that as 1900, with unknown consequences. Some machines are certain to "crash", and there could be unpredictable chain-reactions with linked systems.

Ms Flower told *The Independent* last night: "Our priority is to stop the cataclysmic happening, but inconvenience is something we will all have to live with, when it happens."

"There will be a lot of problems to sort out, even if we avert major crisis. The basic structure of life will continue, even though a lot of the niceties may have gone. If your car breaks down, the central heating stops, the fax doesn't work, that's not catastrophic. But if there's no transport, the banks can't release money, food doesn't get to the shops, and you can't fly around the place, then we have got problems ..."

"If we raise too much of an Armageddon scenario, people shut off their minds and become fatalistic and say there is nothing they can do. We have to strike a balance between complacency on the one hand, and panic on the other. We have got to raise anxiety."

Ms Flower was until recently head of the Central London Training and Enterprise Council. Aged 39, she has worked for BP as manager of communications development, as a director of Plessey Electronic Systems, and as director of sales and marketing with GEC Marconi.

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# Treasury not green enough, say MPs

By Nicholas Schoon  
Environment Correspondent

WHEN it comes to caring about the environment and eco-friendly economic growth, Her Majesty's Treasury is all talk and next to no action, MPs from all parties declared yesterday.

A powerful new Commons committee produced a scathing report on the green credentials of Chancellor Gordon Brown's all-important department.

It also suggests that every household should have a VAT-free fuel allowance for basic heating and lighting. That would help the poor, but to stop richer people wasting energy, there would be a higher tax rate on electricity and gas above this annual allowance.

Tory MP John Horam, chairman of the environmental audit committee, said: "There's no reality to the Treasury's rhetoric. There's no evidence, either in the pre-budget report, or in what they said to this committee, that they have a strategy for sustainable development." The committee's Labour MPs were equally unimpressed. "You can't just play lip service to the environment," said Helen Brinton, the Labour MP for Peterborough.

The committee's first task after being created late last year was to examine Mr Brown's November pre-Budget consultation report. Its MPs wanted to know how the Chancellor would fulfil his aim of raising taxes on pollution and other environmentally harmful activities - "bads" - while cutting taxation on "goods", such as employment.

Unlike ordinary Commons select committees, which scrutinise particular departments, this one can summon ministers and officials from any department. This is because its job is to consider how actions and policies across the whole of government are impacting on

the environment over a time scale of decades.

But its first inquiry got off to a bad start when Dawn Primarolo, Treasury minister, turned down its request to give evidence, pleading the pre-Budget convention of silence.

It was only after pressure from the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions that she agreed to appear, and when she did she gave very little away.

In its first report, the committee complains that it could find no underlying Treasury strategy for judging how its own policies, taxation changes and overall economic growth helped or harmed the environment. Yet no other arm of government had more impact on natural resources, waste and pollution.

At a press conference yesterday, Cynog Dafis, a Plaid Cymru MP and committee member, said: "Green taxes are not just an opportunity here and there to raise a bit of cash." He envisioned them being used to shift the economy into consuming less land, fossil fuels, water, minerals and other natural resources.

With just 10 short paragraphs devoted to the environment, the pre-budget report was a big disappointment to the MPs. They call on Mr Brown to set up a green tax commission to advise him on eco-taxation - something Ms Primarolo appeared to rule out. The committee recommends that with each passing year the Treasury should get a larger proportion of its revenues from taxing pollution and waste, and give regular reports on its progress.

The committee says the anomaly in which VAT is charged on homes being renovated or converted, but not on newly built property, must end. This would encourage urban regeneration and discourage greenfield development.

## Diana's death boosts money for charities

By Kate Watson-Smyth

THE death of Diana, Princess of Wales, sparked a massive increase in the amount of money given to charity, it emerged yesterday.

As trustees of the memorial fund moved to quell criticism of the way the first round of grants have been distributed, some charities said that her death had raised awareness of the importance of donating money.

Vicki Pulman, of the Charities Aid Foundation, said that although a few organisations had lost out as millions of pounds flooded into the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund, many others had benefited.

"In the months after her death there was a massive increase in the amount of money given to charity," she said.

"It stimulated a lot of people who had not previously donated money and it was given to all kinds of charities."

Many organisations who were never associated with the Princess said they had benefited after her death.

Save the Children, whose patron is the Princess Royal, said they had received a large number of donations in memory of Diana.

Joanne Bailey, a spokeswoman for the organisation, said: "There was a new kind of understanding of why it was important to give to charity and we were very gratified by that."

Olive Gearing, of Oxfam, said that in the months after Diana's death, many people had made spontaneous donations in her name.

"Our shop staff reported that a lot of money was given to us in recognition of the fact that we do the type of work that she supported," she said.

The trustees of the memorial fund said yesterday that it would become a vital source of charitable donations. They have been criticised for allocating £8m to eight causes while 95 other charities will share £5m.

But Vivienne Parry, one of the trustees, said: "There will be so many grant announcements that in the end people will take no notice, even though some of them will be for large sums of money," she said.

"The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund will become part and parcel of everyday life in Britain."

Most of the charities who will receive a share of the £5m, including Barnados and Help The Aged, said yesterday that it was an unexpected bonus.

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Joanne Amies-Winter with her husband Stephen. She was found dead after taking an overdose of cocaine

## Body-builder killed by cocaine overdose

BRITAIN'S strongest woman died after taking a overdose of cocaine, an inquest heard yesterday.

Joanne Amies-Winter, 23, was found dead by her husband Stephen, on 23 February on the living-room floor at a house in Newbury, Berkshire, where the couple had been staying with friends.

The West Berkshire Coroner, Charles Hoile, who recorded a verdict of accidental death at Newbury Coroner's Court, said: "The message is quite clear - hard drugs can and do kill."

The hearing was told that scientific tests had revealed that Mrs Amies-Winter had taken as much as two grams of cocaine - a fatal dose - in the hours before her death.

A post-mortem examination showed that the champion body-builder was a regular drug-taker. As well as the cocaine, a small trace of Prozac and larger quantities of

ephedrine, a stimulant, and Nubain, an analgesic, were also found in her body.

Born in Hereford, where she still lived, Mrs Amies-Winter became a triathlete at the age of 14 and went on to represent Britain in the European and world championships.

She also achieved acclaim as a body-builder in national and international competitions and was Britain's strongest woman.

Mr Amies-Winter, also a top European strongman, told the hearing that he had once seen his wife injecting cocaine. He said: "I liked to try all manner of things and she could not really be advised not to until she had done it herself. That was one of her problems."

Mr Amies-Winter told the hearing that Mrs Amies-Winter, a residential care worker, had recently been taken to hospital suffering severe pain. She had also suffered from pleurisy and bronchitis.

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# Nation rejoices as Sierra Leone leader returns

*Close Call*  
in West Africa

THE PRESIDENT of Sierra Leone, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, ended nine months of exile yesterday when he returned to Freetown to a hero's welcome.

Several West African heads of state, including Nigeria's dictator Sani Abacha, flew to Sierra Leone to celebrate the re-installation of Mr Kabbah who was elected president in 1996 but fled to Guinea last May following a coup by junior military officers.

Thousands of people lined the roads from Hastings airport to the National Stadium to cheer the presidential motorcade as it passed. Many had been celebrating at street parties late into the previous night, as police and Nigerian peacekeepers for once turned a blind eye to the midnight curfew.

As the procession passed, the crowds chanted in support of democracy and in praise of the Nigerian-led West African

Ed O'Loughlin in Freetown witnesses a triumphant homecoming

a day for politics but for all the people of Sierra Leone. At last we are free of these bandits."

"The people of Sierra Leone have suffered for too long," Mr Kabbah told the tens of thousands packed into the National Stadium. He promised to do everything in his power to reconstruct the country's infrastructure and economy.

General Abacha, who is expected to resign from the army to offer himself as a civilian candidate in presidential elections later this year, attended the ceremony in civilian clothes. He was cheered wildly by the crowd both as chairman of the Economic Community of West African States and as the man who ordered Nigeria's troops to drive Koroma from power. Few ordinary Sierra Leoneans seem worried about the irony of being saved from military rule by a military ruler.

Having reinstated himself in State House, Mr Kabbah now faces the task of rebuilding a country shattered by nine months under Koroma's Armed Forces Ruling Council, seven years of civil war and decades of misrule and corruption. The army, which joined the RUF in effectively making war on its own people, no longer exists while the police force, already notorious for corruption, has been further tainted by the failure of most of its members to resist the coup.

The economy, previously dependent on the export of aluminium, titanium dioxide (rutile) and diamonds, has been crippled by the war and many displaced peasants have been unable to plant crops. One of the world's poorest countries, Sierra Leone has the world's lowest average life expectancy at 42 years.

President Kabbah: "People have suffered for too long"

peacekeeping force, Econog, which drove Major Johnny Paul Koroma's junta from Freetown last month.

Condemned by the international community and isolated by sanctions, Koroma's army and its allies in the Revolutionary United Front guerrilla movement had devastated the country in a campaign of looting, rape, arson and murder.

"We are very happy to see him [Kabbah] back," said Mohammed Karigo, the chairman of the student group. "All along we have been working under cover for democracy. This is not

## Nigerians outshine the British brass

TIME was when the visit of a British High Commissioner to a town in Sierra Leone was a major occasion, but this weekend in Makeni, Peter Penfold was upstaged by the top brass from West Africa's new dominant power, writes Ed O'Loughlin.

Having flown into Makeni with a humanitarian assessment team, Mr Penfold found his trip coincided with a visit by the Nigerian military commanders who, under the banner of the Econog West African peace-keeping force, had just liberated most of northern Sierra Leone from Major Johnny Paul Koroma's junta.

Quietly waiting at the town's main crossroads, the British team saw the Nigerian officers arrive to the cheers of an enthusiastic crowd, who surged forward to greet Econog commander Major General Timothy Shepheard.

Clutching their swagger canes and shooting sticks, the Nigerians seemed for a moment

to be parodying the colonial-era British officers from whose African regiments their own army had grown. But when General Shepheard told the crowd about the deposed president Ahmed Tejan Kabbah's scheduled return to Freetown today, he spoke Krio, the local creole, and the crowd loved it.

Pushed to the front by the Nigerians, Her Majesty's representative in Freetown was rewarded with a polite but brief cheer. But by the time the local paramount chief, Baisebore Kasangna II, invited him to speak, the Nigerians had already left. It may not have been a deliberate snub, but it made clear that Britain is no longer the major foreign power in Sierra Leone.

Thus despite the fact that the British had come to Makeni bearing gifts, The High Commission and Ministry of Defence have spent the past week busying themselves about an array of humanitarian missions.

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Rocking the world: The Rolling Stones Keith Richards, Mick Jagger, Ronnie Wood and Charlie Watts in Tokyo, where today they will kick off the Japanese leg of their highly-praised 'Bridges to Babylon' tour

Photograph: Sayuri Inoue/Reuters

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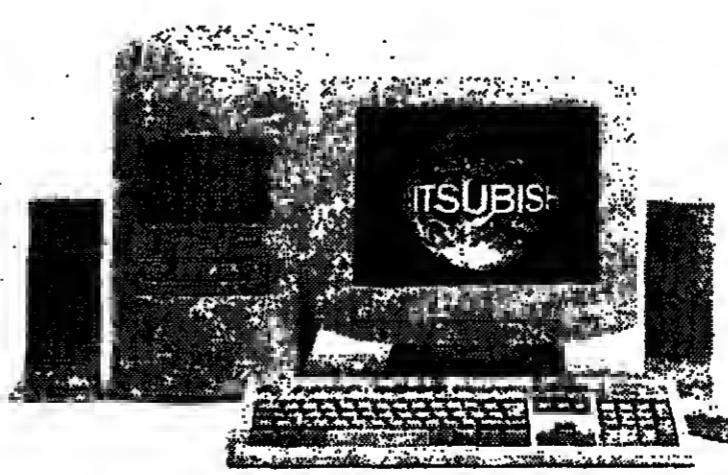
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# Suharto safe as Indonesia edges towards collapse

By Richard Lloyd Parry  
in Jakarta

EXACTLY 32 years ago this morning, Indonesia - like the Indonesia of 1998 - was in an alarming state. Like today, the economy was in turmoil and prices were rising. In Jakarta, the police and soldiers were on the streets, and thousands of students were demonstrating against the government.

After meeting his cabinet on 11 March 1966, the then President Sukarno could resist no longer: following veiled threats of a military coup, he handed over leadership to a young Javanese general named Suharto.

Thirty-two years later, Indonesia's generals, businessmen and civil servants have met to consider the future of their leadership once again. Their economy is close to collapse, and in Jakarta yesterday at least 10 people were arrested in one of dozens of protests held in cities throughout the country. But there is one big difference from the events of 30 years ago. Today, 11 March 1998, after his unanimous re-election yesterday by the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR), Suharto will be sworn in for his seventh consecutive term as President of Indonesia.

It is a measure of his skill that, even with his economy collapsing, Suharto is still the only credible candidate for the leadership of the world's fourth biggest nation.

Part of the explanation is obvious. The MPR is a parody of a democratic body. Six hundred of its 1,000 members are appointed directly by the government, and 400 are members of a parliament, chosen in rigged

elections. Ten are members of the President's family. Suharto was the only candidate, and the MPR held no vote and no debate. At 10am yesterday, the assembly resounded with shouts of "I agree, I agree!". Thus was the matter settled for another five years.

Suharto is the government, and he is as firmly in control now as he has ever been," a Western diplomat in Jakarta said. "Within the government he is all powerful - the machine operates at his command." Who President Suharto disappeared from public view for a fortnight in December, according to



No change: Suharto is the government'

diplomats, the government ceased to function.

"Insulting the president" is a serious crime, and the enforcement of this and other laws against "subversives" have prevented the development of any institutions from which alternatives to Suharto might emerge.

The media is under strong pressure to conform. The current affairs magazine *D&R* is being investigated by the police for defaming the President. Its crime was to put on its cover an image of Suharto as the King of

Spades. When an executive of *D&R* was asked why it had done this, he said: "No matter how many times we turn the cards, President Suharto will still be elected." The editor could face several years in prison.

The courts are seen as colluding with the government. And Islam, Indonesia's majority religion, is divided between several organisations which President Suharto has played off against one another. Even the two legal opposition parties are virtually run by the government. When Megawati Sukarnoputri, the only other person in the country with a personal following to match Suharto's, became too popular for the President's liking, she was thrown out of the leadership of the Indonesian Democratic Party at the government's behest.

Only the armed forces have the strength to offer a potential challenge. But Suharto's control over the appointments of senior officers is absolute.

At 76, Suharto has already had heart surgery and several unexplained periods of illness. There is the spectre of civil unrest, and the question of whether the army and police can stop sporadic riots over food prices from coalescing with the political protests organised by students and intellectuals. The army may be more divided than it appears. But in the absence of a popular uprising or a military coup, Suharto may see out his next five-year term, in spite of the growing poverty and instability of Indonesia.

"At the moment the riots and protests are isolated," one foreign observer in Jakarta said. "As for the military, why would they want to take over this mess?"

## 12/FOREIGN



General disappointment: The former dictator Augusto Pinochet weeping yesterday in Santiago as he formally handed over control of Chile's army to General Ricardo Izurieta. Photograph: Reuters

Chile's old dictator weeps on leaving the army

SANTIAGO (AP) — General Augusto Pinochet stepped down yesterday as commander of Chile's army with tears in his eyes, ending a 65-year military career that turned him into one of Latin America's longest-lasting dictators.

"Fatherland of mine, I've been your soldier and that makes me happy," Pinochet said, his voice breaking with emotion during his farewell speech. He made no reference to the controversial post he was expected to take as senator for life.

The ceremony, in which General Ricardo Izurieta replaces Pinochet, began with some tension after President Eduardo Frei was booted by relatives of military men in the crowd. Some chanted "Pinochet, Pinochet".

Pinochet, 82, was honoured by a parade at the Military Academy by 3,000 soldiers and 2,000 guests led by President Frei.

Although General Pinochet delivered a mostly military speech, he did refer to the bloody coup of 1973 in which he toppled President Salvador Allende. The military had been forced to act because the nation "was in the brink of self destruction," he said. But, he added, "I do not want to look back, because that anchors the country in the past".

When General Pinochet went to the presidential palace on Monday night for a formal farewell, police had to use water cannon to scatter a small group of demonstrators protesting at his senate plans.

The clash reflected the growing opposition to Pinochet assuming a senate seat, a position he receives as former president under the constitution he himself wrote. His constitution also made him commander of the military after he stepped down from the presidency in 1990.

Protests were expected to continue today, when General Pinochet is sworn in to Congress. Pinochet's critics say a man who shut down Congress and persecuted lawmakers has no place in the legislature.

Gen Pinochet's regime was accused of massive human-rights abuses, including more than 3,000 political killings, according to official figures. Some lawmakers planned to begin impeachment proceedings against Pinochet. But their effort appears doomed as the right-wing opposition, which holds a majority in the Senate, has made clear it will oppose it.

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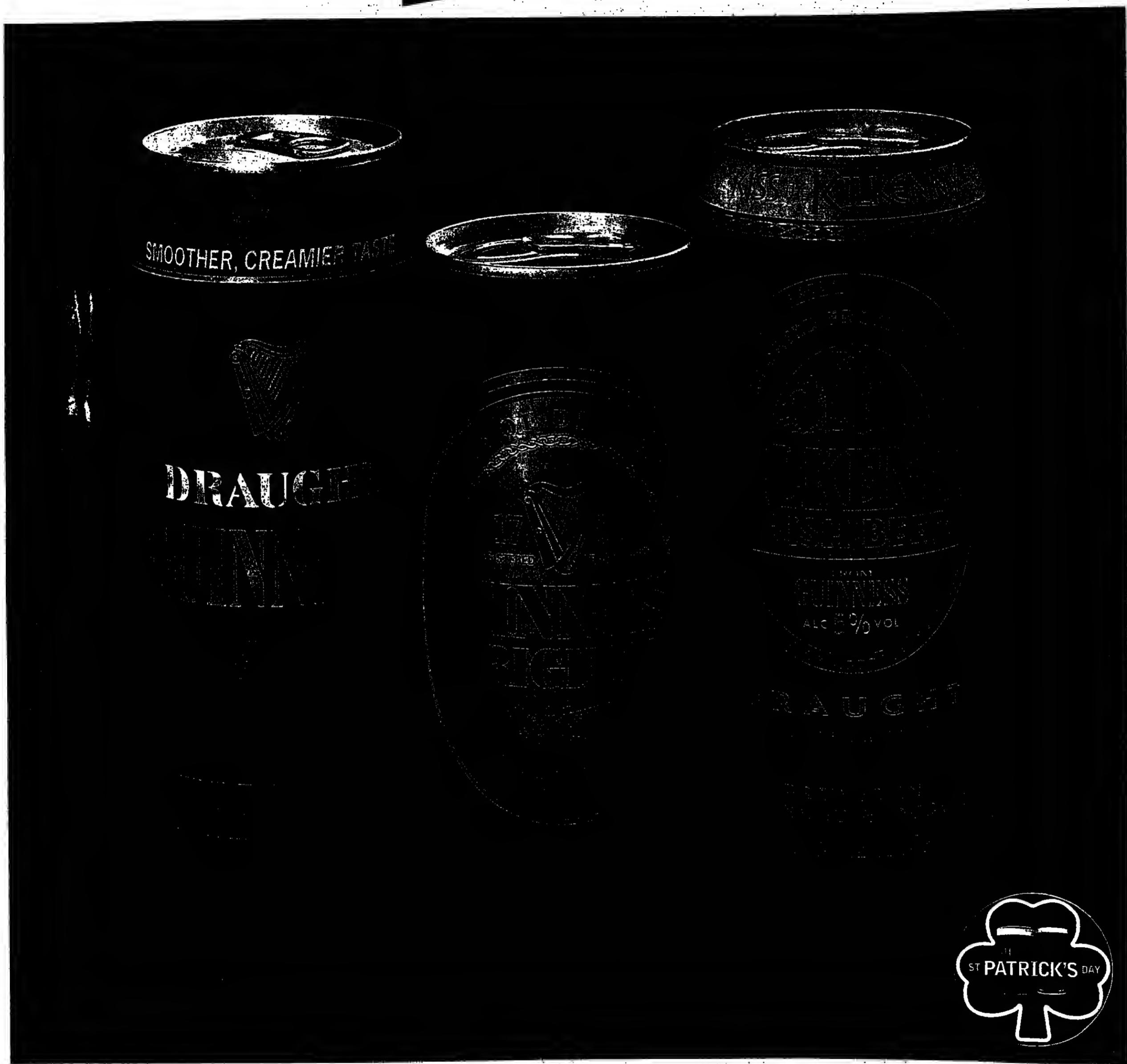
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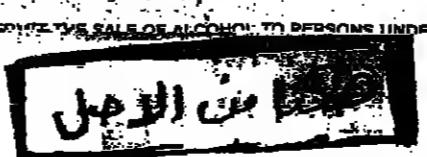
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## Why the Così cast were adrift when they went to Marks

The Royal Opera House may be happy with costumes from M&S, but, says Melanie Rickey, Armani offers so much more

THREE female singers from the Royal Opera House went costume hunting in the Marble Arch branch of Marks & Spencer on Monday, after Giorgio Armani refused to alter clothes he had previously designed for a modern-dress production of *Cosi fan tutte*. Armani was paid £18,000 last summer, and £18,000 in 1995, to provide costumes for revivals of the opera, but was unhappy about making



### LIBERTY EVENING

THE *Independent* is hosting a reader evening at Liberty on Wednesday 25 March, 6.30pm-8.30pm. The first 250 readers to apply for tickets will be talked through the collections for men and women by *The Independent*

stylist, Sophia Neophitou, and the fashion editor, Tamsin Blanchard. Expert advice will help solve your new season shopping problems and there will be a 15-per-cent discount available on fashion purchases bought on the

night. Tickets are £5, including a free goody bag from NARS cosmetics, champagne and canapés. Send a cheque payable to Liberty Pic to Jo Childs, Liberty Press Office, Regent Street, London W1R 6AH.

### OUT OF THE CLOSET

This week Holly Davies talks to Andrew Flora and Ren Pearce, the duo behind the label Pearce Flora

**Ren Pearce**  
"I BOUGHT two pieces of Galliano when I was a student from Joseph on Sloane Street for a super knock-down price. They were from one of his earliest collections just after he left college, when he was really avant garde. It was about the time when I just started my BA in Nottingham. One piece is this jumbo cord claret-coloured jacket with cords hanging on string from the front. It's completely mad. The other is this shirt which is really, really long; it comes down to my knees. It's made of this patchwork embroidery anglaise in really bright colours. The cuffs are huge which gives the whole thing a weird silhouette. They're always the things that I notice once in a blue moon in my cupboard and it brings a smile to my face. I've had lots of good times in both of them!"



Flora and Pearce: serious shoppers

**Andrew Flora**  
"I'M ABSOLUTELY not a hoarder; as soon as I realise I've made a big fashion mistake I throw it away. I'm trying to build a definitive wardrobe of the most essential 50 items. I buy loads of stuff from D Squared. They design for real men, it's quite sexy too. The trousers are low-cut and flat-fronted. I buy it all from a shop on South Molton Street. I'm a complete shopaholic, when-

ever I'm in town I can't help myself. I've got to the stage of my life when I should be allowed to buy whatever I want. I've admittedly got a fuchsia pink John Richmond shirt at the moment, it hasn't quite made it onto my back yet, and appears to be heading for the edge of my wardrobe rail where I'm sure it will find the floor pretty soon.

"I do keep some of my stuff in a suitcase under my bed, like a sailor shirt that Ren made me years ago. I'd never throw it away but I'd never wear it either."

"My fetish is to collect swimming trunks. I've just got a real thing for them. If I go on holiday I take a different pair for every day. Last year I splashed out on a pair of Gucci flip-flops which cut my feet to shreds. That's the last time I buy anything with big sparkly double G logos."

# The Shoe. The Bra. The chase

What are this season's must-have accessories? Tamsin Blanchard joins the throng of black-clad fashion editors jostling for the best buys in Milan boutiques

**KATE BETTS**, the chic, sleek fashion news director from *American Vogue*, is heading for Gucci on Via Montenapoleone, the Bond Street of Milan. She has time for a half-hour shop between shows and knows exactly what she wants.

"There is only one shoe," she says, incredulous that I should be in any doubt that the rows of shelves holding Gucci sandals, loafers and thong are an irrelevance. The only shoe worth buying costs 295,000 lire (£98) and has a narrow, chiselled toe, a sling-back and a diamante G set into the back of the two-inch heel. It comes in "buff" (fashion editor speak for beige), black, navy, deep burgundy and red. It also comes in not-mock-croc for 695,000 lire. And if you don't already possess a pair, you simply will not pass muster as a fashion victim. Oh, and if you wait until your return to London to buy them they'll cost nearly twice as much.

Twice a year, the world's most fashionable people - for whom it is a serious profession to know the shape of The Shoe or the precise length of The Skirt for both this season and next - assemble in Milan for Fashion Week.

In Italy, there is nothing frivolous about fashion. La Moda makes the nine o'clock news every night and commands entire pages in newspapers each day. Not surprising when you consider that Armani's empire is worth \$752.2m and Gucci's total sales for 1997 are estimated to be close to US\$1bn, with shoes accounting for \$128m of that figure for the first three-quarters of the year.

And when you walk the streets of Milan's platinum triangle, bounded by Via Montenapoleone, Via Sant'Andrea and the narrow, cobbled Via della Spiga, you see why. Women who are

interested in fashion, power and status will stop at nothing to buy the ultimate bag, (black patent leather shopper with thin handles from Prada) the must-have shoe (need I say Gucci?) or even the to-die-for bra (Prada again).

You might think that shopping at Gucci or Prada is an intimidating experience. But not in Milan. There, the shops are usually chock full of fairly ordinary looking Japanese tourists working their way through shopping lists. And during Fashion Week, they are also full of black-clad fashion editors, elbowing the tourists out of the way and working themselves into a frenzy with their 30-per-cent press discounts.

Sally Curtis, British *Elle*'s fashion editor, buys most of her clothes from second-hand vintage clothing shops or

swarming through the stores like a plague of locusts. At the beginning of the week, Gucci wisely stocked up on The Shoe. Towards the end of the week, stocks are beginning to wane and, by Sunday, it is sold out of all but small sizes; a bit like Sainsbury on a Sunday afternoon. The plummy G can be seen twinkling on the heels of fashion editors from the *Vogues* and *Elles* around the globe.

Francesca Fearon, a freelance journalist, throws caution to the wind and buys a pair, admitting: "It's because I'm a fashion victim. The kitten heel suits me. I love the shape of the pointed blunt-edged toe, the glint of the sparkly G on the heel. They are very sexy looking... very sexy." Fearon buys hers in "buff" because she is visiting Gucci at

men's chunky flip-flops in black leather for 290,000 lire.

At Prada, the clothes are faring better than the shoes. Miuccia's perspex wedge heels are not seducing the women who would walk on a six-inch nail if it were fashionable. But some editors are taking note from the catwalks and investing in flat shoes - plain black leather moccasins or backless, spoon-shaped numbers.

The new underwear line is another matter. The company has opened up a chic little boutique on Via della Spiga especially for the collection of banana-yellow satin slips, baby pink satin and tulle bras, silk knitted knickers and raspberry coloured vests. A bra will set you back about 150,000 lire - but how can you resist when it is in pink, this spring's official colour? I can't. Nor can model of the moment Audrey Marnay, caught shopping at Prada's younger line, Miu Miu. She can't resist two pairs of shoes - red patent ankle-strap high heels and flat sporty sandals - a pair of navy trousers and a grey jumper.

But even the most die-hard shopping victim is defeated by a single item by Dolce & Gabbana that puts everything else into perspective: a pair of pop socks. As is always the way in fashion, these are no ordinary socks. We first saw them on the catwalk last October. They are black and embroidered heavily with golden wheat sheaves.

The shop assistant unlocks a cupboard and pulls out a rectangular box. Inside, the socks are wrapped in tissue paper, always a sign that you can't afford them. Delicately, she pulls them out, as though antiques from the V&A. How much? "One million, four hundred thousand lire," comes the reply. In any currency, that's a lot of money for a pair of socks. These are new stock. The first delivery of 10 pairs sold out within a week. That's almost £4,750 for 10 pairs of socks that do not come with an anti-snag guarantee.

If you had the choice which would you buy? The socks or a pair of Gucci kitten heels? Or how about a return ticket to New York (you could even pick up a pair of socks for free on the plane). Or would you simply opt for a lifetime's supply of socks from M&S? Ask any fashion die-hard and I could guarantee the answer every time. After all, you wouldn't have to choose between the black and the buff.



Above, from left, Independent senior stylist Sophia Neophitou wears sage-green ankle-strap shoes by Stephane Kelian for Martine Sitbon; Observer fashion editor Jo Adams in red velvet heels by Michel Perry; and Australian Vogue's Edwina McCann wears the shoe of the season, Gucci 'kitten heel' black slingbacks

Photographs: Kevin Foord

at Portobello Market in west London. She ventures into Prada to see what the fuss is all about. "It's like old ladies at jumble sales snatching items that don't suit them and squeezing their trotters into an extraordinary amount of brightly coloured shoes," she says. "Kitten heels."

Meanwhile, the educated shoppers who live, eat and breathe fashion are



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The trouble with men: From childhood to fatherhood, the male of the species feels under attack

# If life is not enough



JACK  
O'SULLIVAN

IN THE picture on the right, Tony Dwyer looks happy. A glancing smile caught by an unexpected photograph suggests the kind, considerate person everyone remembers. The lank hair in need of a wash tells you he wasn't trendy: he went everywhere in that jacket and jeans. He did not try to impress with his appearance. And he was shy – in other posed pictures he hid his face with his hand. But this photograph shows good old Tony who always wiped his feet when visiting friends' houses, the young man who would gladly mow your lawn, someone whose sensitivity to suffering stopped him eating meat from the age of 12. There is no hint in this image of what drives a young man of 18 to walk off the top of a multi-storey car park one morning and end his life.

Indeed, even those who knew him best still cannot make sense of his suicide last August. They have studied his final day in minute detail. They know that, the night before, Tony had visited the local supermarket as usual with his dad to buy Pop Tarts (he ate them as usual for breakfast on the morning of his death). And of course, he picked up Yorkshire puddings that he would have eaten as usual the following Sunday, putting roast potatoes in the middle, but eschewing the customary beef. Six minutes before he died, we know he drew £30 from a cash machine, money which was never recovered. His family assume he gave it to a beggar.

When the police asked his mother, Diana, to identify his body, she laughed, out of shock. It couldn't possibly be Tony. Someone must have stolen his ID, she said. And even when she knew it was him, she was convinced that someone must have pushed him. But the police told her that the event had been recorded on the video in the car park, in Nottingham. At 10.24am on Tuesday 5 August, Tony Dwyer walked off the roof. Walked. He did not jump. The precise time of his suicide is recorded on his funeral order of service. But no reason is given. He left no note.

There are many cases like this every year, as hundreds of young people kill themselves: in 1995 632 young men and 151 young women under 25 died by their own hands. Only last week, Daniel Kirwan, 16, was found hanging from a tree at his home in Cheshire. Recently,



Last look:  
A final  
photograph  
of Tony  
and, left,  
his mother  
Diana and  
sister, Jo

Photograph,  
left, Rui  
Xavier

Richard Todd, the actor, has written movingly about how his son Seamus, 20, shot himself after a two-year depressive illness. The statistics for young men are particularly worrying – suicide attempts among this group have doubled in the past decade. Although far more women than men make suicide attempts, those by men are much more likely to prove fatal.

The epidemic has prompted the creation of Papyrus, a support group for parents whose sons have killed themselves. They have conducted research among members, in an attempt to identify common themes and enable other parents to spot the danger signs before it is too late.

Jean Kerr, a founder whose 17-year-old son, Edward, took his life in 1989, has questioned 79 sets of parents. She

is convinced that his suicide was the result of a momentary decision. It could have been avoided if Tony had known how to share his feelings. "I still can't see him sitting down eating Pop Tarts that morning saying to himself, 'I'm going to commit suicide today'. I just can't see it at all."

Papyrus can be contacted at: 01706 214449. Parentline, which also offers advice is on 01702 559900.

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## Wanted: justice for fathers whose bond has been broken

"I WAS naive enough to think that my name on the birth certificate meant something," Phil says bitterly. "But really it means nothing at all."

Phil has been to court more than 20 times in the past couple of years to try to get access to his son. He split up with the child's mother soon after the birth and has been trying ever since to play an active role in his child's life. "I've worked hard to try and establish a bond between us. I think it's important that a child has two parents and I'm determined to play my part."

Stephen has also struggled over the last few years to see the twins whose birth he witnessed. He has not seen them at all for a year and a half because the mother has allowed them to be adopted. As an unmarried father without parental responsibility he could not stop her.

What Phil and Stephen and countless other unmarried fathers do not realise is that as the law stands they have very little right to say in their children's upbringing if they split from the mother.

"The mother can take the children abroad, change their names, change their schools and the father does not need to be consulted," says Jim Parton, chairman of Families Need Fathers. But now Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, is considering whether unmarried fathers who sign their names on the birth certificate should be offered parental rights. Such a proposal would give a father the right to see a child regularly even if

he left soon after the registration of the birth.

At the moment a name on the birth certificate is not enough; what such a father needs is "parental responsibility" – a concept introduced by the Children Act 1989 which it defines as "all the rights, duties, powers and responsibilities and authority which by law a parent of a child has in relation to the child and his property".

Mothers automatically have parental responsibility, as do married fathers. The Act also

ensured that unmarried fathers could acquire parental responsibility through the courts – it did not automatically confer parental responsibility on them because of a need to protect vulnerable, unmarried mothers, especially those whose children had been born as a result of violent or coercive relationships. If Lord Irvine's proposals become law, a father would not need to go through this process in order to have these rights.

Many unmarried fathers are unaware that at the moment



The threatened tie: Many fathers lose contact

in West London puts it: "All teenage boys get mugged. It's a fact of life – they just have to learn to deal with it."

Michael Solomon Williams, 15, has endured three frightening incidents – an attack by a gang of five on the Tube going home to north London and two of demands for money. "We just did what they said: we put our arms up and they searched us," he says. "It wasn't nice but it wasn't too bad. The Tube attack was difficult to forget because it was on the route we take every day."

Michael has received little advice on such situations from his school. And while many schools invite police liaison officers in their main concern seems to be drugs.

Another boy, Nathan Kerr, has endured three recent attacks the last week before the incident involving Euan Blair. Nathan, who, like Euan, is 14, was mugged while shopping in Oxford Street with a friend. Later the police said half-term breaks always offered rich pickings for thieves. Such experiences encourage teenagers to carry their money in their socks and hide their watches at an alarmingly early age. But there is not much they can do to disguise their unbroken voices

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All teenage boys  
get mugged –  
it's a fact of life.

They just have  
to deal with it

and their middle-class air.

What makes the situation

often worse is the public's re-

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## Professor Martin Hollis

"THE FOX knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." Martin Hollis was a hedgehog, pursuing the elusive goal of reason with passionate commitment for over 30 years. But he was also a fox, raiding every discipline to sustain his restless, often impatient, intellect.

By his death he had published 10 books, four edited collections and some 90 papers. In the Sixties rationality was threatened by relativism in the social sciences. By the Nineties the threat had assumed the more seductive hues of postmodernism. Against this background Hollis defended reason by deepening our understanding of it.

The key to Hollis's rationalism was "the epistemological unity of mankind", the view that "some beliefs are universal... There are, because there have to be, percepts and concepts shared by all who can understand each other." Hollis acknowledged P.F. Strawson's influence in his early formulations of the rationality assumption.

His own contribution became distinctive as he engaged with social sciences, wrestling with each of them until it submitted to the canons of reason. Surprisingly, such presumption did not outrage practising social scientists, since Hollis, unlike the caricatured armchair philosopher, successfully acquired their vocabulary and techniques. He published jointly with economists, political scientists, social workers and international relations theorists.

In game theory and social choice theory Hollis hit a seam of gold in the form of powerful techniques for handling orders of preference. By manipulating those techniques he transmuted the *Instrumental rationality* familiar to economists into expressive rationality: an enriched notion of reason, embracing moral as well as intellectual virtues, but still compatible with economic theory. It would reconcile the drive of the citizen towards community, with that of *homo economicus* towards profit maximisation – work for the alchemist rather than the miner, perhaps.

Hollis translated Rousseau's revolutionary vision of "a remarkable change in man" into a more down-to-earth picture of ordinary people who manage,

even in an imperfect world, to harmonise individual aspirations and social roles, autonomy and duty, trust and reason.

Hollis's work was genuinely original but oblique to current philosophical fashions and slow to receive the recognition it deserved. Though lacking in personal ambition, Hollis finally

acquired numerous honours, as editor of the Germano-English philosophical journal *Ratio* (1980-87), as visiting professor in Germany and the United States, and as lecturer in China and India. His most prized laurel was his Fellowship of the British Academy, where he became Council member and chair of the Philosophy

Section. From 1967 until his death he would remain in Norwich, promoted Senior Lecturer in 1972, and Professor in 1982. The Sixties were halcyon days for the new universities, affectionately satisfied by Hollis's UEA friend Malcolm Bradbury in his novel *The History Man* (1975). Recruited before the first students had graduated, when teaching was in temporary huts and administration in an elegant Jacobean mansion, the Hollises had the zeal of new converts, true believers in a system they were helping to create.

Martin Hollis embraced Norwich life, serving as JP for 10 years and supporting Patria's career in local politics. At UEA he performed every administrative duty, as head of philosophy, Dean of his School and Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the university. His speed and efficiency left his less talented colleagues breathless, particularly as his output of distinguished research work never slackened.

But by the time he became PVC in 1992 the young university had become middle-aged. With economic cuts the demand was to process more students for less money. Despite its innovations UEA had maintained a successful system of final examinations (albeit tempered by continuous assessment) and an academic year of three terms. Hollis was given the unenviable task of "delivering" a new regime of "modular" units examined twice yearly at the end of the two semesters that replaced the old terms. The change was time-consuming and disruptive. Hollis did his duty in what he called the administrative "bunker" with customary expertise, but little enthusiasm. His loyalty was unwavering, his sense of irony sharpened by the tasks now expected of him. Things had come full circle from his days at FCO.

This story of intellectual achievement and corporate service leaves much of the man in shadow. Those who knew Hollis for a quarter of a century found him as inscrutable as

they did when they first encountered him. He loved chess, which he played at a high level and which is often used to illustrate philosophical moves. He played reckless bridge and invented countless board games of his own. Puzzles intrigued him. A collection of the brain-teasers he set for the *New Scientist* was published as *Tantalizers* in 1970.

He was both intensely sociable and intensely private. He wrote as he talked, allusively, self-deprecatingly, teasingly. His clarity was deceptive. From his compressed epigrams his readers and listeners made their own plodding reconstructions. His favourite forum was the informal but regular meeting of people with shared enthusiasms. He was a founder of the East Anglia Philosophy Triangle, which met in Cambridge, Colchester and Norwich. The gatherings of the Peripatetics, a discussion group of local friends, were more intimate.

In August 1996 Hollis was still in brilliant form, teaching at the Philosophy Summer School near Guangzhou, China, luring yet another audience into the intricacies of game theory. Early in 1997 the symptoms of a malignant brain tumour appeared, and before Easter he took sick leave. Most

cruel for the master wordsmith, the capacity for language was the first to be affected. Though fading fast, he remained involved in meetings and discussions with close friends and colleagues.

In one poignant paper Martin Hollis had quoted Rilke: "The wish to have a death of one's own is growing ever rarer. Only a while yet and it will be just as rare to have a death of one's own." He bore his last terrible days with uncomplaining fortitude. He died in his home in the care of his wife and sons he loved. Perhaps that is something like a death of one's own.

Timothy O'Hagan

**James Martin Hollis, philosopher, born London 14 March 1938; Lecturer, University of East Anglia 1967-72; Senior Lecturer 1972-81; Professor of Philosophy 1981-98; Dean of School of Economic and Social Studies 1983-84; Pro-Vice-Chancellor 1992-95; Editor, Ratio 1980-87; FBA 1990; married 1963 Patricia Wells (created 1990 Baroness Hollis of Heigham; two sons); died Norwich 27 February 1998.**



Hollis: inscrutable



Marjorie and her younger brother Harold Wilson: 'I suppose he was a sort of birthday present'

## Marjorie Wilson

IT IS difficult to be the male spouse of a leading lady politician. I suspect it is no less difficult being the big sister of a Prime Minister. Marjorie Wilson succeeded in being a lady of considerable worth in her own right. After studying Chemistry at Leeds University, she became a teacher, later moving to Cornwall, where she spent many years as headmistress of St Blazey's Infants School and, from 1966 to 1971, of Biscoe Infants School.

David Blackford, Secretary of the Cornwall branch of the National Association of Head Teachers, describes her as "a caring". Nothing, he says, was too much trouble for her. She was respected by staff and parents alike and a keen member of his association. "Nobody would ever have been aware of the special circumstances of her relationship with the Prime Minister."

Marjorie used to bring her father, Herbert Wilson, a widower, to Labour Party conferences, where they both became something of a benign institution. I remember her irreverent outpourings at Scarborough in 1967. Harold, she told us, was

born the day before her seventh birthday. "I suppose he was a sort of birthday present." Marjorie would talk about him as if he were half baby and half doll, someone to be protected.

Actually Harold Wilson

owed Marjorie a great deal, as she was who was to look after his father and carry many of the family responsibilities.

Without her he might not have

had the time so assiduously to climb the Labour Party tree.

All was not sweetness and light. As the secretary of the Labour Party Standing Conference on the Sciences and a young MP, Harold Wilson wanted me to talk at length to his father Herbert, who had been a chemist, about the science policy, during the white heat of the technological revolution.

Later, when I told him genuinely that his father had been interesting and his sister charming, he looked quizzically, in a particular Harold Wilson way, as if to say, "That's only half the story." Ever a gossip, he told me that Marjorie had bullied him and reprimanded him for being a bad boy.

When Harold Wilson made a celebrated sightseeing trip to London and visited Downing Street, it was Harold and not Marjorie who had a photograph

taken outside the door of No 10. The relationship between brother and sister, however, became very good. When Harold was called to Chequers to see Clem Attlee in 1947, he was staying with Marjorie at her St Austell bungalow (she had moved to Cornwall with her mother shortly after her father started to work there in 1938); they spent the evening making guesses about what Attlee would offer.

Marjorie wanted to know on Monday morning where her brother was to go in the Government, so he arranged to leave a symbolic message on her breakfast table on his way back to Millioe Cove in Cornwall where he used to stay. A lump of coal would mean that he was to be Minister of Fuel and Power, a strip of metal would mean Minister of Supply and a slice of bread Minister of Food. Neither of them had imagined that he would be given the presidency of the Board of Trade.

Tam Dalyell

**Marjorie Wilson, schoolteacher; born Manchester 12 March 1909; MBE 1972; died Truro, Cornwall 8 March 1998.**



Walsh: a reformer

## Judge Brian Walsh

BRIAN WALSH was widely hailed as one of Ireland's greatest judges. His abilities were reflected in the speed of his promotion through a profession where youth is not normally an asset. A High Court judge at the unbarred age of 39, he was there just two years before being promoted to the powerful Supreme Court.

Early experience as a barrister was gained on the border circuit in Cavan-Monaghan where he displayed an enormous appetite for work. His arrival on the bench coincided with a period of discontent with the accepted order in the

post-Independence Catholic-leaning state. The historian Joe Lee, in his book *Ireland 1912-1989* (1989), saw Walsh's elevation as part of the overturning of the monolithic state ethos fostered under Cosgrave, de Valera and Costello governments when dissidents either emigrated or were marginalised". Walsh was "the outstanding legal reforming mind of his generation", Lee wrote.

Perhaps more than any other, his decision in *Byrne v Ireland* (1973) allowed the citizen to sue the state, altered legal history. It ended a British-inherited tradition based on

the presumption that, as the barrister Seamus McKenna put it, "the Crown could do no wrong".

Other landmark judgments echoing this commitment to the individual's rights included his 1966 ruling that bail could not be withheld simply because of a belief that a defendant might commit further offences if freed.

In the landmark 1973

McGee case, he ruled the 1935 ban on the importation of contraceptives was unconstitutional.

This encouraged a more liberal social climate and a gradual improvement in the

status of Irish women after generations of hardship associated with rearing large families on limited incomes.

His 1974 appointment as leader of Duhlin's side on the Anglo-Irish Law Enforcement Commission, a creation of the Sunningdale Agreement, soon

in the state's most trenchant defender of civil rights at a time of international anger over treatment of prisoners in custody in Northern Ireland.

He retained his independent thinking until the end of his career, with a landmark 1987 decision forcing the Dublin government to hold a

referendum before it could ratify the Single European Act.

Controversially, he also protected the "political exception" when the Supreme Court directed that suspects not be extradited where they were likely to suffer ill-treatment.

This came in the case of the Maze escapees Dermot Finnigan and James Pius Clarke, the latter having been a victim of alleged sustained beatings during earlier custody in Northern Ireland. The five judges all bluntly agreed on "the probable risk that if Finnigan were returned [to Northern Ireland] he would be assaulted or injured by the

illegal actions of prison officers".

Earlier, Walsh's hostility to extraditing suspects back to that regime had seen sparks fly

between himself and a colleague on the Law Enforcement Commission, Mr Justice Seamus Healy.

Healy took the more liberal

view in the long-running saga

which led eventually to criminalisation.

Walsh was also opposed to what he felt were over-liberal attitudes which he feared might encourage demand for abortion by making it an easy

option and backed the anti-abortion clause in the Irish Constitution.

Alan Murdoch

**Brian Walsh, barrister and judge; born Dublin 23 March 1918; called to the Irish Bar 1941, Inner Bar 1954; High Court judge 1959-61; Supreme Court judge 1961-90; member, World Association of Judges 1966-98; leader of Irish delegation on Anglo-Irish Law Enforcement Commission, 1974; President, Irish Law Reform Commission 1975-85; member, European Court of Human Rights 1980-98; married 1944 Noreen Joyce (one son, four daughters); died Dublin 9 March 1998.**

## LAW REPORT: 11 MARCH 1998

### Resale of unexpired tickets amounted to theft

**Birthdays**  
Mr Douglas Adams, author, 46; Mr Terence Alexander, actor, 75; Miss Agatha Barbara, former President of Malta, 75; Sir John Battin, former poet and author, poet and critic, 1819; Carl Sprague Ruggles, violinist and composer, 1876; Sir Malcolm Campbell, speed record holder, 1885; Dorothy Gish (de Guchi), silent screen actress, 1898; Lord Wilson of Rievaulx (John Harold Wilson), former prime minister, 1916; Deans: Hannah Cowley (Playwright), playwright and poet, 1787; Rolf Boldrewood (Thomas Alexander Brown), author, 1915; Sir Alexander Fleming, bacteriologist, 1893; Eddie Slovik, Gardner, lawyer, author and creator of "Perry Mason", 1970. On this day Chelsea Hospital for old soldiers was founded, 1682; the first successful English daily newspaper, the single-sheet *Daily Courant*, was published near Fleet Street, London, 1702; the first performance of Verdi's *Requiem* was given, Venice 1851; the Bradford fire, near Sheffield, burst its banks, and 250 people lost their lives, 1854; the first telephone call was made by Alexander Graham Bell, 1876; the Great Blizzard began in the United States, 1888; the British blockade of Germany began, 1915; Baghdad was captured from the Turks by the British, 1917; the first London performance of the musical show *No, No, Nanette* was presented, London 1925, following its presentation at Victoria Palace, 1923; Lord Justice Mantell, Robert Peter Coombes and Birol Eroglu against their convictions of perjury, 1974; Sir Alan Yentob, director, 1935; Mr Alan Montgomery, former High Commissioner to Tanzania, 1944; Lord Lawson of Blaby, former Chancellor of the Exchequer, 66; Sir Henry Manning, former deputy chairman and managing director, British Airways, 78; 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## Who is to blame for water scandal?

YET ANOTHER privatisation chicken flies home to roost on Labour's roost. Last week the way the Tories sold off British Rail landed on John Prescott's desk. This week we are told his Department for Environment, Transport and the Regions is liable for a huge pensions bill for the state-owned water industry – because, surprise, surprise, most of the choicest of the assets that were meant to pay for water employees' pensions ended up after privatisation in the coffers of the water pics.

The story is complicated, but it matters a great deal not just to current pensioners, but potentially to hundreds of thousands of other state employees and to the taxpayers who may have to do the bailing out. Talk by ministers about tight belts and spending limits ceases to convince if – albeit unknowingly – they are presiding over massive profligacy. This imbroglio is not of Labour's making, but it is in the Government's interest to show that it is tidying up the mess. A few executions, figuratively speaking, would help.

This is a tale of divvying-up public sector assets in anyone's interest but the public's. When water was privatised in 1989 employees had the choice of moving to new employers' pensions or staying with existing arrangements. Those who stayed had their pensions guaranteed, they thought, from a fund into which various assets were put. But this "closed" fund got short shrift. Some of its assets were duds, such as a stake in a company that later went bust. This fund is now in huge – £400m plus – deficit, with a great and growing gap between what it can pay out and the obligations it has to pensioners now and to come. Guess who makes up the shortfall – taxpayers.

The story is told in a report today from the National Audit Office. This is the 800-strong team of accountants and specialists charged with ensuring public money is properly spent. It answers to the Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir John Bourn, who in turn answers to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee. This is the ultimate mechanism to detect and remedy spending abuse. Taxpayers have nowhere else to turn. Yet this report instils a disquieting sense of how little we, or anyone, knows about the vast archipelago of state bodies spending public money. Here the NAO tells only half a story. The recent history of pensions for the water industry is a catalogue of mistakes, perhaps even recklessness with public money. NAO auditors have evidently followed the paper trail. But where are their conclusions? Where, most important, is their hill of indictment?

The public has suffered a huge loss. Who is responsible? Where do we look – to pensions advisers, trustees, fund managers, or to civil servants or Secretaries of State for the Environment? Does Sir John Bourn not know who is answerable – he surely cannot fear naming names, since his reports enjoy parliamentary privilege?

In another corner of the public empire there is the Audit Commission, which oversees council and health service accounts. The district auditors it supervises do name names; they sometimes even surcharge them and disqualify them from public office. Why is there such a disparity between local and national levels in the business of detection and punishment?

With this report Sir John Bourn has let it be known he is anxious about the custodianship of other public-sector pension funds, their assets totalling some £100bn. (If he really wanted to scare us he would also mention the pay-as-you-go pension arrangements for local authority staff which are seriously out of kilter.) But warnings only go so far. The Public Accounts Committee has the power to identify individuals responsible for this farago. If they cannot be hauled before a court then at least can be publicly named and shamed. The Government believes in that procedure for miscreant youth. Let us see it, oot before time, applied to people who instead of serving the public have by their incompetence or negligence cost the public huge sums of its money.

## Negative ads can work



KNOCKING COPY works. Forget comedy, romance or the sell based on science: people, it seems, are persuaded by nothing as much as hard-hitting criticism. According to a study in *The Journal of the American Medical Association* adverts directed against the tobacco companies and their political cronies turned out to be more effective in stopping people smoking than factual messages trying to persuade them of the health risks.

The key words were "deceptive and manipulative". If cigarette companies were made out to be dishonest and unscrupulous, they were "delegitimised" and people started to ask themselves hard questions about their own behaviour. Becoming aware of what lies behind the tobacco industry's own advertising, smokers measurably changed their ways. It is not an isolated finding. There is European evidence that on controversial issues such as the use of fur by the fashion trade it is the blood-on-the-pelt approach that works best. How many other institutions are there that might be targeted in this way as deceptive and manipulative ... pharmaceuticals, finance houses, certain food producers?

Yet knocking copy has its limits. People in this country say they dislike negative campaigning by political parties, though there is also evidence of its effectiveness. Consumers have an abiding sense of fairness. Shill-voiced campaigns can be counter-productive, if they make people start to feel an industry or product is being victimised. But that is not something the public are ever likely to feel about tobacco.

## What really goes on at the BBC – an absolutely, totally genuine fly-on-the-wall report



MILES  
KINGTON

TODAY I am privileged to bring you an extract from an explosive BBC fly-on-the-wall documentary called *The Beeb*, which goes into the very heart of the BBC and shows the hilarious yet tragic things going on at the top. The programme was made inside the bunker of John Birt, the current Director General of the BBC, with his full knowledge. Here we go...

Birt: We have recently come under a lot of criticism for faking documentaries. Does anyone have anything to say to that?

Man with Glasses: Is this the thing about the Learner Driver?

Birt: Yes.

Man with Glasses: Oh, that. I can explain that.

Birt: Go ahead. Explain.

Man with Glasses: We found it would be cheaper to recreate certain scenes, sir, rather than film them at source. We got

the subject to tell us what had happened, and then we restaged it and filmed it in a faked version. But it was cheaper, sir. That's what you've always said. Make it cheap.

Birt: I haven't said anything of the sort. What I have always said is, Let's have a leaner, more efficient, more cost-conscious Corporation!

Second Man with Glasses: Same thing, John. It's just that you clothe it in business PR language. Half the time we don't know what you're talking about.

Man Without Glasses: (very softly) And the rest of the time we don't care.

Birt: What was that, Will?

Man Without Glasses: Nothing, sir. I was just wondering if there was a glass of water...

Birt: Should have brought your own.

Man with Glasses: That's brilliant.

Man with Itch: Similarly, a lot of TV is

faked. The news itself is a rather vapid re-

construction of the real thing. A wide-screen film showing on the small screen is a vapid recreation of the cinema experience. I should think a lot of *You've Been Framed* is faked, even though it's a film.

A lot of those stunts must be staged by amateurs just to get Beadle's shilling. Indeed, there was a case the other day of two drunk

young men who tried to stage a video clip for Beadle when there was an almighty storm hitting the sea wall of their seaside town. One took the camcorder while the other walked along the sea wall. He was taken by a huge wave and drowned, while his mate was filming the whole thing. This was an attempted stunt which went wrong

– and became real!

Birt: What are you trying to say?

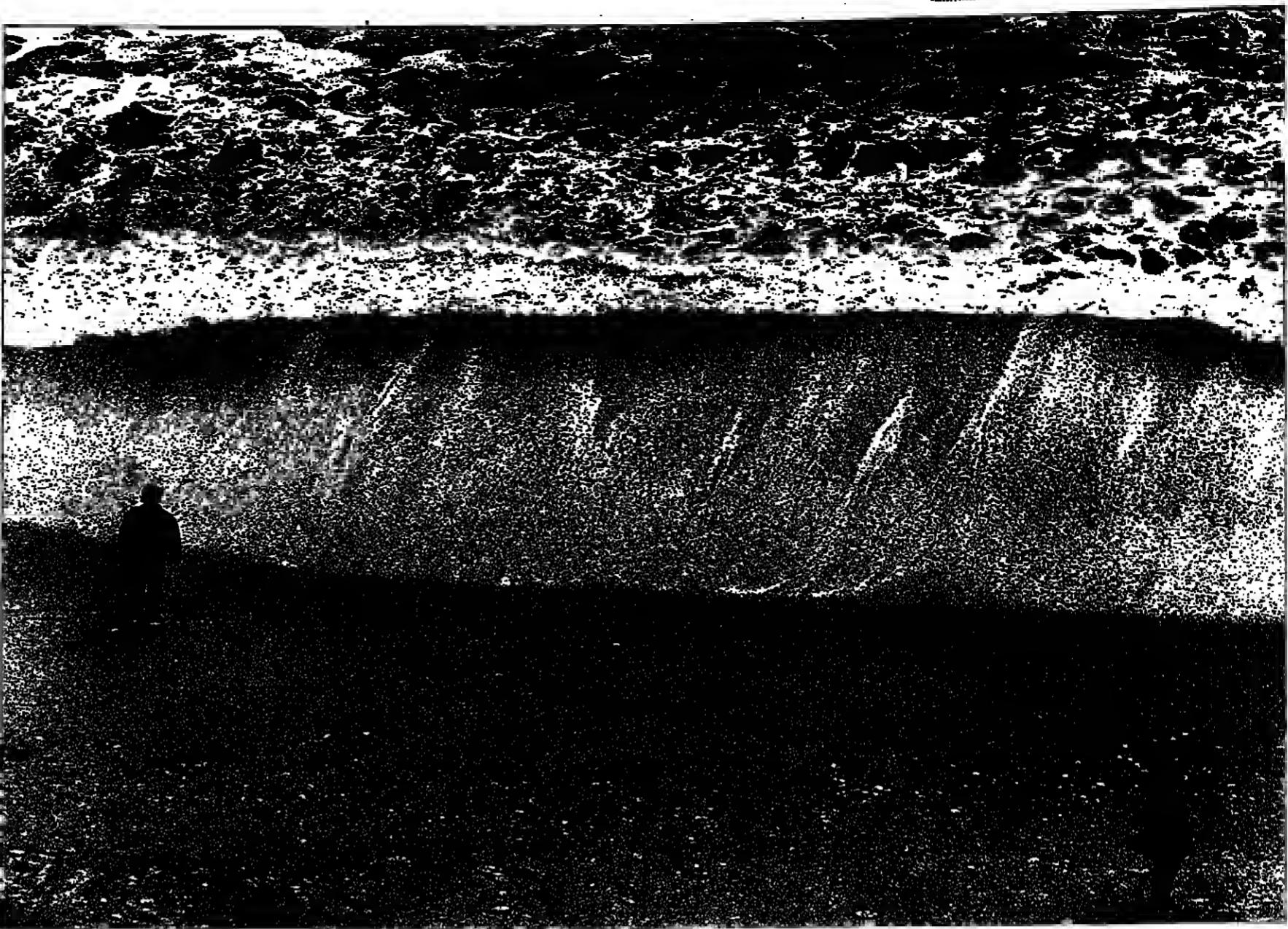
Man with Itch: I'm trying to say that in

fact the recreated, the faked, the re-

hearsed, the reconstruction all make

BETTER television than the real and ac-

## PICTURE OF THE DAY



Sand, sea and human figures: a view from the clifftops at Porthcurno beach on the St Anthony Peninsula in Cornwall

Photograph: John Voos

A 9x12 print of this photograph can be ordered on 0171-293 2534

## LETTERS

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number  
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are  
asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

### It's Latin to them

THE IDEA of Latin as a common European second language (letters, 3, 6 March) would be quite justifiably opposed by the Greeks: first because they have a perfectly good classical language of their own and second because they were never part of the Western Empire where Latin was the language of trade and administration.

BT are required, as a matter of contract, to publish their charges but nowhere in their leaflets is it made explicit that a premium charge of 32p is made for every landline call made to a mobile phone that is turned off.

I and millions of others are being charged for this ingenious so-called service which is quite useless. Perhaps the Monopolies Commission should investigate.

PAUL WINNER

London SW1

### Art for all

DAVID RODWAY (letter, 9 March) in his comments on Paul Valéry's appreciation of the Gateshead Angel of the North does a disservice to art criticism.

His implication, that only those trained in art are qualified to assess art, ignores the popular and valuable interest in public works of art and the continued investment in them by local councils. Art is an expression, mirror and critique of a culture, and that culture embraces the man in the Gateshead street as much as the academic in London.

JASON M REESE  
Lecturer in Engineering  
University of Aberdeen

### Harmless dope

ANTONY ALEXANDER (letter, 6 March) fears the demotivating and dispiriting effect of cannabis on regular users. He couldn't be more wrong. A year ago I had the pleasure of living for a time with a Moroccan farmer and his family. He and his co-workers smoked dope from dawn till dusk and had done so for years. They showed no lack of motivation and were great fun to get to know.

ROB MURPHY  
Newcastle upon Tyne

### Lively competition

PAUL McCANN says that "no one would seriously consider trying to revive Miss World in the Nineties" (report, 28 February).

Miss World is now arguably the most-watched annual television show in the world, with more than 2 billion viewers in over 150 countries. In this country, Sky believe that there is life in Miss World, for they televised it. We are alive and kicking, and if British terrestrial television cares to show Miss World on television and it doesn't get top rating of the night, we will donate £25,000 to the Variety Club children's charity.

ERIC MORLEY  
Executive Chairman  
Miss World  
London W1

### Watery Moon

SO WATER has been found on the Moon. Whatever else, please don't privatise it.

RICHARD WINSTONE  
Stroud, Gloucestershire

Man with Glasses: Cheating in these fly-on-the-wall documentaries, sir...

Birt: Right. Has anyone got anything to say on these?

Man with Itch in Right Ear Which He Keeps Scratching: Yes, sir. Well, it strikes me that it's a load of hoo-ha about whether fly-on-the-wall documentaries are recreated or not. Take an example.

When we have finished this meeting, a summary of the minutes will go out as a record of it. It will be, if you like, a recreation of this meeting. It will be dreadfully inaccurate. It will be weighted to reflect

John Birt's views. It will discard all the argument and feeling. But it will come to be accepted as authentic, even by those who were there, even though it's deeply flawed.

Man with Glasses: That's brilliant.

Man with Itch: Similarly, a lot of TV is

faked. The news itself is a rather vapid re-

construction of the real thing. A wide-screen film showing on the small screen is a vapid recreation of the cinema experience. I should think a lot of *You've Been Framed* is faked, even though it's a film.

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Man with Itch: I'm trying to say that in

fact the recreated, the faked, the re-

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BETTER television than the real and ac-

tual. Television is all the worse when it is not recreated. *Father Ted* tells you more about the Church and Ireland than a five relayed mass from Dublin would. On TV, the real is less genuine than the fake!

Man with Glasses: God, that's terrific stuff!

Man with Pea: (pausing and turning to Birt) What do you think, sir?

Birt: I haven't the faintest idea. I didn't see what he was driving at. If it's not in pseudo-managerial language, I can't understand it.

Man with Itch: My God, I never thought of that. We can't understand the Director General, because of the way he talks – and he can't understand us!

### APOLGY

I have now learnt that some of the above fly-on-the-wall, if not all of it, was in fact recreated using actors and hack writers. Those responsible will be fired.

## Failed your exams? Start a business in the playground



HAMISH  
MCRAE

If AMERICAN education is so bad, why do foreigners flock to the US to study? The same question applies here. We worry about the quality of our education, but people come from all over the world to be educated in Britain.

There is one obvious and valid explanation – that the students who come to both countries do so because they are coming to the best universities. The problems in America and Britain are not with our elite universities which are excellent, but with the general mass of the school system. But I have seen several items in the last few weeks that suggest that there is a second and rather different reason for admiring both the US and the British education systems, the schools as well as the universities. This is that while we may be less effective at teaching "hard" skills, such as maths and science, than our Continental and East Asian rivals, we have become very good at fostering "soft" and "loose" skills, including creativity, intuition and entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the returns on these skills will be even higher in the next couple of generations than they are now. Most people could be taught to become reasonably competent scientists; it is vastly harder to teach them to be successful entrepreneurs.

On conventional measures the US and UK school systems seem to be about the middle of the pack. There was a squall of stories ten days ago in the US after a report on comparative standards in education put the States towards the bottom of developed countries in maths and science, with the UK doing only a bit better. This is probably right, for there are pretty good comparative statistics going back to the 1960s. I have just seen the results of one such study, discussed at a conference on "Excellence in Education" hosted by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York late last year and published in the March edition of its *Economic Policy Review*.

This study looks at test scores for several years between 1963 and 1991. The main conclusion I would draw is that there has been a general convergence of scores over this period. Back in the 1960s there were enormous differences between Australia, Sweden and the US at the bottom; and Israel, Japan and Belgium at the top. But by 1991 all the countries are clustered in the middle with not much distance between China and Korea at the top and Ireland and Portugal at the bottom.

The UK does not do at all badly in these charts. We suddenly shot to the top in 1985 and have been above the US right through this period. But I think the bigger message is not one about standards but one about comparative advantage. Given the narrowing of the spread of attainment, it has become pretty difficult to retain a significant national advantage in the teaching of "hard" subjects. I'm not saying the teaching of the three "Rs" is unimportant. Far from it. Rather the message

is that any competently-run educational system is going to do this adequately well. Comparative advantage will be in "soft" subjects. If that is right, educationalists are going to be asked a whole new set of questions, such as "How do you teach entrepreneurship?" To most people that very question will seem pretty odd. Imagine the University of Entrepreneurship of North London. Ridiculous?

Well, no, as two examples show. In Finland there is a government programme teaching people just this. There are lectures, seed funding for new ventures, even subsidies to new would-be entrepreneurs. Is this programme working? Er, not terribly well, I gather. A friend who lectures to these people reckons that it often simply encourages people to start businesses which only produce an adequate living because of subsidies from the taxpayer. But at least the Finns are trying.

The second example is Japan. There they have identified the lack of entrepreneurial zeal as one of the reasons why Japan has failed to recover from recession. They have adapted the word entrepreneur into *an-entrepreneur* – don't laugh, we don't have a word in English either – and are now running lectures, courses, foreign visits, study groups and so on in an effort to generate the appropriate spirit.

Well there is certainly no shortage of entrepreneurship in the US or even the UK. How do we do it?

I suppose part of the impetus comes from



relatively low taxes on earned income, and an absence of regulations inhibiting business start-ups. But it can't just be that. I suspect that we teach it, sometimes explicitly, as in the business enterprises that schools run for sixth-formers, but sometimes without really knowing we are doing so. We certainly teach creativity: we have national prizes for creative writing in schools; we have tremendous emphasis on music and drama; we teach creativity in fashion and other design. But I sense that we are also trying to link this creativity with earning money by creating a culture in which people, especially young people, are encouraged to regard setting up a business in their spare time as a fun thing to do.

We have managed to create an educational system that accepts, and even fosters, an element of disorder and encourages questioning. It asks people to look at themselves and the world around them – and think of ways of earning their living other than slogging up corporate or government career ladders.

Isn't this what education should be about? Some people would be appalled at the idea of teaching people to become entrepreneurs. But encouraging people to think for themselves, testing received views, relishing argument and discussion – this is core stuff. It is not a long step beyond that to get people to look at society's needs and desires and use their intelligence to think of ways of satisfying these. Besides, if the Finns and the Japanese think this is a good idea there must be something in it.

## Why America's teenage girls can't get enough of 'Titanic'



MARY  
DEJEVSKY

The boat may sink, but a new feminist role model has risen on the silver screen

AS AWARD after award speeds towards James Cameron for his epic blockbuster and Oscar-favourite, *Titanic*, a handful of critics are professing surprise. Not because of the scale of its success, nor because of the records it notches up week after week for takings and audiences. Nor yet because of the contrast between the dire warnings of failure and the glorious reality.

Almost three months after the film's release, the surprise comes from the complexion of the audiences. In front of cinemas across America, the winding queues comprise not laggardly first-time viewers curious to see if what everyone else says about the film is true, but second, third, fourth and

fifth-timers, the vast majority of them teenage girls.

Now the easy explanation is that they have come for the sole purpose of drooling over the gorgeous looks and early natural charm of Leonardo DiCaprio, who plays Jack, the doomed hero from the lower orders. In other words, feminism – in terms of self-assertion – is dead; long live romance.

Having belatedly joined the *Titanic* queues myself, I would like to venture that the explanation is more complicated, and perhaps more heartening for those of us on the staff side in the late Nineties. My bet, borne out subsequently by some gentle inquiry, is that all these girls are not frequenting the cinema only, or even mainly,

for the sake of the luscious Leonardo. They are there quite as much for the leading lady, the lonely, stubborn Rose, torn between duty to family, class and convention, and her contempt for the whole charrade.

Rose (played by Oscar-nominee Kate Winslet), with her mixture of self-doubt and forwardness, sense of responsibility and just to break free, holds a particular appeal for America's young women, so many of whom find themselves stranded between aggressive self-assertion and wistful longing for romance. Rose is even a little more plump than your average American girl would like to be, but she seems comfortable with her body – another consoling thought for angst-ridden di-

eters for whom Barbie was the model. The director, James Cameron, describes Rose as "muscle plus striking femininity". Her women fans are less abstract about it. "She was a daredevil. She went on to have adventures; she didn't waste her life," says Karen Schoemer in *Time* magazine. "She's so romantic, so real," says a young friend who recently saw the film for the sixth time. For America's teenage girls, Rose is the next century's woman in the making.

Something similar goes for the developing relationship between Jack and Rose. By turns conspiratorial and reckless, respectively teasing, sexual (but always equal), it offers a fully acceptable road map in girl-boy relationships. No wonder the girls are out in force for *Titanic*. It's just a pity that the boys are not there too. They might learn about the sort of companionable devotion their girlfriends will now expect.

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## CWC snubs Microsoft with software plans for digital TV internet access

By Peter Thal Larsen  
and Michael Harrison

The UK's largest cable company yesterday delivered a snub to Microsoft by choosing software backed by Netscape and Oracle to power its new digital television service.

Cable & Wireless Communications, which has 760,000 cable television customers in the UK, will launch its digital service this autumn with software provided by Network Computer Inc, a joint venture between Netscape, best known for its internet browsers, and software group Oracle.

Subscribers will receive a digital set-top box for their television sets, giving them access to 200 channels. But with the NCI software - known as the DTV Navigator - they will also be able to surf the World Wide Web, send and receive e-mail, and eventually play games, make bets and do their shopping online.

Digital cable will be the third form of digital television to become available to viewers this year. Satellite broadcaster BSkyB will start transmitting a 200-channel digital service in June, while British Digital Broadcasting, a joint venture between Carlton and Granada, plans to launch 30 channels in the autumn. Both suppliers also plan to offer interactive services.

Graham Wallace, chief executive of CWC, said that customers would have "more control, choice and flexibility in how and when they access a whole range of information and entertainment services - all through their existing TV sets."

Industry analysts welcomed the move. "They're taking cable beyond being just a telephone service like BT or a pay-TV service like Sky," said James Ross, an analyst with ABN Amro. CWC shares closed up 3p at 351p.



David Roux of Network Computers Inc (left) and Graham Wallace of Cable & Wireless

Photograph: Kristian Buus

if they no longer require the service.

Mr Wallace said CWC was considering charging less than £10 a month - the current standard charge - for internet access even though CWC's service will offer connection at 20 times the speed of the most powerful modem available.

Yesterday Greg Clarke, CWC's chief operating officer, said the company was talking to a "long line" of leading com-

panies about providing their services on-line next year.

CWC's service will compete with that provided by BSkyB, which plans to launch its own interactive services through a joint venture with British Telecom, Midland Bank and Matsushita.

The venture, called British Interactive Broadcasting, will

provide internet access and a range of services from home shopping and banking to edu-

cational, sporting, entertainment and public service information. The launch is subject to approval from regulatory authorities in Brussels.

BIB is in talks with up to 30 content providers including Sainsbury, HMV, Thomas Cook, Great Universal Stores and Doding Kindersley, the educational publisher.

The four partners in BIB have put up £265m to develop the service and help subsidise

the cost of the set-top boxes needed to receive digital satellite services. The set-top box will be connected to an ordinary telephone line which, in turn provides access to the internet.

This means that it will take longer to get onto the internet than through CWC's service. But BT is conducting trials with strange

new "advanced technologies

that provide much greater capacity and quicker access.

Trials with a technology

known as ADSL, which compresses signals and makes the traditional copper wire pair work like "a modem on steroids" begin summer in west London.

At present there are an estimated 1.6 million personal computers linked to the internet. But BT forecasts that within five years there will be 3.5 million set-top boxes and integrated televisions in use providing internet access and 14 million by 2010.

### Wrists may fly after Grabiner stalks out of United

By Peter Thal Larsen

Stephen Grabiner, the United News & Media executive who has been appointed to run British Digital Broadcasting, the television group, has left United News without working out his contract and may launch legal action against the company.

Mr Grabiner is believed to have cleared his desk earlier this week after becoming increasingly frustrated with the delays in negotiating his departure from the group. He was named as chief executive of BDB, the joint venture between broadcasters Carlton and Granada, at the end of January. At the time United News said Mr Grabiner would work out his 12-month notice period, keeping him at United News until the beginning of 1999 - several months after BDB's planned launch date.

United News and BDB have subsequently been negotiating the release of Mr Grabiner from his contract. Industry analysts believe that Lord Hollick, United's chief executive, hoped to use Mr Grabiner as a bargaining chip to improve his position in the digital television market. United submitted a bid to operate Digital Terrestrial Television, but lost out to BDB.

The deadlock is understood to have frustrated Mr Grabiner, who was poached from Telegraph Group, the newspaper publisher, two years ago to run United's newspaper interests. His responsibilities were also reduced substantially last month when United completed the sale of its regional newspaper division, effectively leaving Mr Grabiner in charge of little more than the Express titles and the *Daily Star*.

Mr Grabiner is understood to be considering using the disposal as grounds for legal action. One industry source said: "You might think that having three-quarters of the profits sold from under you is akin to constructive dismissal. They certainly have not offered him a position of equivalent status."

The Coral purchase has also caused an outcry from rivals in the industry, including William Hill, now owned by Nomura, the Japanese bank. Analysts believe there would be no shortage of buyers for any shops that Ladbroke is forced to sell. The Tote is known to be keen to expand its estate, as is Stanley Leisure, currently the third biggest player in the market, and William Hill.

Mr Grabiner could not be reached for comment last night. A spokesman for United said the company had nothing new to add.

## Midshires wavers as board considers £780m Halifax bid

By Lea Paterson

THE BOARD of Birmingham Midshires met last night to give "preliminary consideration" to Halifax's attempt to prise the building society away from the grip of the Royal Bank of Scotland. The Midshires directors are expected to decide whether to break a legal agreement signed by both themselves and the Royal Bank of Scotland last August.

Under terms of that agreement, Midshires is not allowed to hold formal talks or exchange information with a third party. The most likely outcome is that Midshires will ask Royal Bank to release it from parts of the agreement, rather than break the contract, a source close to the discussions said.

It is believed that, if Midshires broke the contract, it could be hit by a penalty fee.

A Midshires spokesperson said the board would not immediately decide whether to recommend the Halifax bid to its members over the Royal Bank bid.

The Royal Bank agreed in August to pay a price of between £605m and £630m for Birmingham Midshires. On Monday



Peter George: Purchase of Coral was unconditional

## Ladbroke referral to the MMC looks like a sure bet

By Andrew Yates

Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, is poised to refer Ladbroke's £362.7m acquisition of the Coral betting chain to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission over fears it will give the group a monopoly in the betting industry.

A referral could be announced this week after an preliminary investigation of the deal by the Office of Fair Trading. The Government could force Ladbroke to divest of hundreds of betting shops to overcome competition concerns or could require it to sell the

whole of the 833-strong Coral estate. Ladbroke, led by Peter George, controls 2,600 betting shops, or 35 per cent of the total UK market after signing an unconditional deal to buy 833 Coral shops from Bass on New Year's Eve. It had hoped to avoid an MMC inquiry by selling 133 of its betting shops to the Tote. Ladbroke claims dispositions of these sites means it conforms to the "quarter-mile rule" laid down by the MMC when Mecca merged with William Hill in 1989.

This stipulated that a bookmaker could not have more than one shop within a 440 yard radius of another branch and was aimed at ensuring no one was able to establish a local monopoly. Until a few weeks ago, Ladbroke was confident this would be enough to avert an MMC inquiry. But sources suggest the group is resigned to the fact that its betting business will face months of uncertainty as a full-scale investigation gets under way. The acquisition has raised concerns among senior cabinet ministers. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary and a horse-racing fan, has publicly voiced worries about the deal and Alan Meale, another Labour MP, has led the attack

against the acquisition. One source said: "A referral now seems inevitable. Political pressure is growing for an MMC referral which is likely to lead to more divestments."

The Coral purchase has also caused an outcry from rivals in the industry, including William Hill, now owned by Nomura, the Japanese bank. Analysts believe there would be no shortage of buyers for any shops that Ladbroke is forced to sell. The Tote is known to be keen to expand its estate, as is Stanley Leisure, currently the third biggest player in the market, and William Hill.

## Poor pay dearly for tobacco addiction and cough up out of all proportion on duty

By Diana Coyle  
Economics Editor

Higher tobacco duty falls more heavily on the poor because the richest third of the population has more or less given up smoking, while the bottom fifth are puffing away as heavily as ever, according to a report funded by the cigarette lobby.

The Fair Cigarette Tax Campaign, the lobby group financially supported by tobacco manufacturers, will use the claims as ammunition against further increases in duty.

The report also claims the

increases in real terms - started by the Conservatives and continued by the present government - are boosting illegal imports from abroad, at a cost in lost tax receipts of £690m a year.

The findings, based on research by London Economics, a consultancy firm, suggest high tobacco taxes redistribute the burden from the rich to the poor. The duty paid by the top 30 per cent of the income distribution has fallen since 1993, even though rates of duty have climbed. The amount paid by the 20 per cent at the bottom

has increased over the same period, and these households spend more every week on tobacco and tobacco tax than better-off households.

The poorest tenth of the population spend just under 14 per cent of their income on tobacco tax, compared to less than half a per cent for the richest tenth.

The pattern of spending means that every increase in the duty makes it an ever more regressive tax, penalising the poor more than the rich.

The report was financed by Philip Morris.

## Wetherspoon rues its TV-free ambience as World Cup fever threatens to drive punters to other pubs

By Andrew Yates

The World Cup football championship in France this summer promises to provide a bonanza for the betting and leisure industry - but there is one person who will not be cheering.

Tim Martin, chairman of JD Wetherspoon, the pub chain that has banned TV screens and music from its pubs, yesterday admitted the rest of football will cost the group dear, with drinkers switching to rival hostels who are willing to show the games. "If Gazza breaks into tears again our

sales will suffer. In 1990 sales dipped by 10 per cent a week during the World Cup. This time it could be worse and it will have an effect on second half profits," he said yesterday. Mr Martin also admitted the group had fallen foul of the Trading Standards Office.

Wetherspoon has spent £700,000 introducing new glasses marked with a line indicating a pint measure. The pub chain started an advertising campaign with the slogan "We offer 5 per cent more beer here." However the posters incurred the wrath of trading

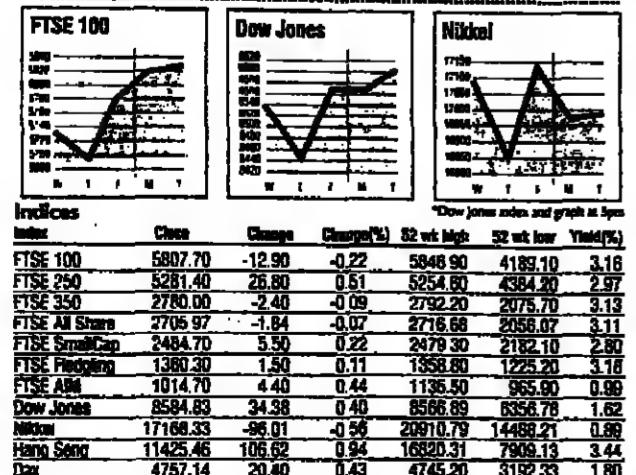
standards offices, who questioned the group's claims in the end they had to be torn down.

Wetherspoon plans to open 50 pubs in the next six months, including what it claimed would be the first new purpose-built site in central Newcastle since Roman times. It is on track to have 500 outlets by 2001 after one of the fastest expansion programmes the pub industry has ever seen.

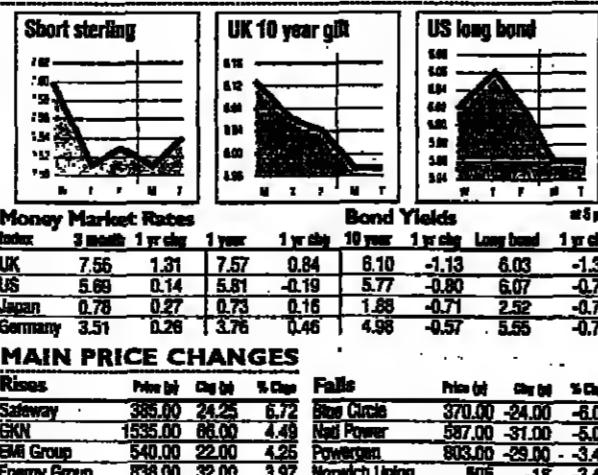
However it has shelved plans to take the chain overseas and open pubs in Paris.

Investment column, page 22

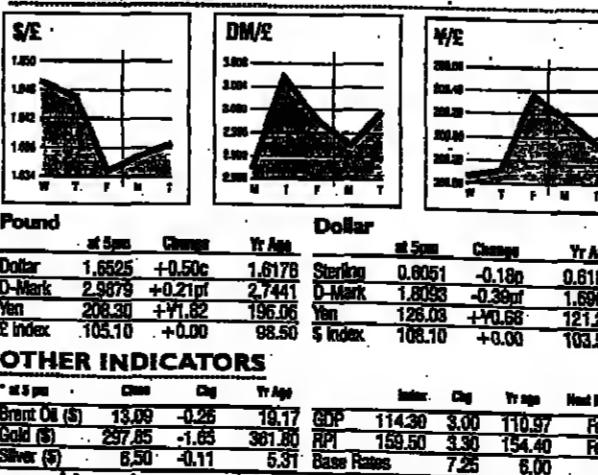
## STOCK MARKETS



## INTEREST RATES



## CURRENCIES



## TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.3577	Italy (lira)	2.867
Austria (schillings)	20.37	Japan (yen)	205.82
Belgium (francs)	59.83	Malta (lira)	0.6293
Canada (\$)	2.2465	Netherlands (guilder)	3.2663
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8454	Norway (kroner)	12.12
Denmark (kroner)	11.12	Portugal (escudos)	294.47
Finland (markka)	8.8677	Spain (pesetas)	245.11
France (francs)	9.7244	South Africa (rand)	7.8000
Germany (marks)	2.9090	Greece (drachma)	12.78
Hong Kong (\$)	49.79	Switzerland (francs)	2.3725
Ireland (pounds)	12.27	Turkey (lira)	369.367
UK (pounds)	1.1642	USA (\$)	1.5964

Source: Thomas Cook  
Rates for indication purposes only

JOHN



## OUTLOOK

Writs may  
fly after  
Grabiner  
stalks out  
of United

## The hidden costs of pensions mismanagement

Almost everyday brings another shocker of a revelation about the previous government's privatisation programme, it seems. Last week we learned that no proper valuation was done ahead of the sale of the rolling stock leasing companies, with the result that the public purse was seriously short changed. Today we are told that the Government's privatisation of the water authorities in the late 1980s has left the taxpayer with a hidden £420m pensions liability. Whatever next?

Both these disclosures are made by the National Audit Office, the Government's financial watchdog. Its report on water privatisation makes particularly fascinating reading, if only because the NAO itself in the immediate aftermath of the water privatisations said a fair price had been realised under the circumstances and everything was generally hunky dory. In the murky world of the public finances, it transpires, nothing is ever that simple; it now appears the taxpayer was ripped off after all.

The story bears some repeating. Prior to privatisation, the water industry ran a collective pension scheme which because it was largely unfunded was showing a hefty deficit. Since the water companies couldn't be privatised with unfunded pension liabilities, it was decided to break up the fund

into fully funded water company schemes and a closed fund that would be left in the public sector to meet the liabilities of existing pensioners. So far, so good.

The problem arose on the valuation of assets. What happened was that the water companies took all the decent assets - largely equities and cash - for themselves, leaving the public sector fund with a lot of dodgy property and underperforming equities. If this had been done deliberately by the Government it might have seemed bad enough, but in fact it was done by a process of subterfuge. The company that divided up the assets, Queen Anne's Gate Asset Management, was owned by the water companies themselves.

The upshot was that a public sector liability of less than £100m at the time of transfer was with dispatch turned into a much larger one when the bottom dropped out of the property market in the early 1990s. This was compounded further by very poor management of the fund. The end result is that by 2005 the public sector part of what remains of the water industry pension scheme will have run out of assets but will still have £420m of liabilities to meet.

All this may seem of little more than academic interest so long after the event.

We kind of already knew, or at least suspected, that the way these privatisations were accounted for in the public finances was a fiddle. But plainly there are lessons here too. The public sector has responsibility for managing pension funds with liabilities of well over £100bn. If the mismanagement of water industry pension assets is anything to go by, there could be an awfully large pension tab in the making for future generations to pick up.

By mid summer, the Financial Services Authority will be largely up and running. Five of the nine organisations it will eventually encompass will have moved in together at the FSA's new London docklands headquarters in Canary Wharf, and to all intents and purposes the FSA is already operating as a single regulator for the City and financial services industry.

All of which may seem rather odd given that the legislation that brings the FSA into existence and gives it powers won't be published until the Autumn and is unlikely to receive the Royal Assent until the following summer. Is this not putting the cart just a little bit before the horse? The Commons Treasury Select Committee is beginning to think it might be and has belatedly decided it ought to be monitor-

ing the progress of this at present almost wholly unaccountable beast.

Parliament is one thing. The advent of the FSA seems to be going largely unheeded in the City too. What with all those sackings, restructurings and mergers, not to mention having to deal with the millennium bug and preparing for the Euro, City folk may have more important matters on their hands. Howard Davies, chairman of the FSA, is meticulous about consulting on all the FSA's initiatives. But if the City doesn't bother to make its voice heard, it will only have itself to blame if Mr Davies fails to get the structure right.

When Ladbrooke bought the Coral betting shop business from Bass at the start of the year, it was effectively betting that the deal would not be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. So confident was Ladbrooke's chief executive Peter George that the deal would escape regulatory scrutiny that he agreed to make the purchase unconditional and duly handed over £363m of the folding stuff.

As an each way bet, however, Mr George also agreed to dispose of 133 of Coral's shops to the Tote, so that the deal conformed with the "quarter mile rule" - the requirement that no single company

should own more than one betting shop within a 400 yard radius. The rule was established in 1989 when William Hill merged with Mecca to become number one in the market.

Even after the Tote deal, however, Ladbrooke plus Coral still dwarfs other players in the industry with an estate of some 2,600 shops and a market share of around 35 per cent. This is the sort of figure that makes an automatic MMC referral an odds on favourite.

The Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, a keen race-goer and one-time newspaper tipster, has already intimated that the deal should be examined. With Margaret Beckett as President of the Board of Trade, he is pushing at an open door. Ladbrooke could probably offload quite a few more shops to satisfy the MMC and not suffer a loss. But if the MMC orders a large-scale disposal then Ladbrooke will be forced into a fire sale, made worse by the fact that William Hill, the other big player, would face much the same regulatory hurdles. When Bass was prevented from acquiring Carlsberg Tetley it at least had a fall-back position that allowed it to sell back the business to Carlsberg and Allied. Mr George has no such escape route. For a bookie, this is turning into quite a gamble.

### MCI acts to calm fears over WorldCom deal

MCI, the US telecoms giant, moved to reassure investors its \$37bn (£22bn) acquisition by WorldCom was still on track despite reports of competition concerns at the US Justice Department. Regulators have widened their probe into the deal, with particular regard to the Internet. The European Commission is also investigating the proposed deal. MCI said it still expected the deal to go through by the middle of the year. WorldCom made its bid after a 1996 offer for MCI by British Telecom went sour last year when BT lowered its offer.

### Crédit Lyonnais staff sue

Staff at Crédit Lyonnais, the French bank, are taking their employer to court to force it to reveal details of restructuring proposals. It has made proposals to the European Commission in return for authorisation of additional state aid. A representative of the staff union said it was "unacceptable" Crédit Lyonnais employees had been unable to obtain copies of the proposals.

### Independent Insurance surge

Shares in Independent Insurance Group surged by 10 per cent after it unveiled better than expected first-half results. Operating pre-tax profits rose by 38 per cent to £58.3m in the year to December. Shares closed at 1395p, up 140p.

### Kingfisher looks east

Kingfisher, the retail group that includes B&Q, Woolworths, Comet and Superdrug, opened its Asian head office in Hong Kong and said it was looking for acquisition opportunities in the region. Geoffrey Mulcahy, chief executive, said: "The Asian financial crisis hasn't changed our faith in this particular place."

### Transworld drops takeover

Transworld HealthCare has called off talks on a possible takeover of Healthcall Group, the UK healthcare services provider. The healthcare provider, which last week said it was considering a £58.5m bid, said it had "no present intention" to make a bid. The offer would have been worth 105p a share. Healthcall shares fell 12p to 87.5p. Transworld's decision leaves HCMS, a company set up by Healthcall's management to acquire the company, as the only bidder.

### Williams sheds NuTone

Williams, the fire protection and security group, signalled its retreat from home-improvement services with the \$242m (£148m) sale of its NuTone subsidiary. The American door chimes to bathroom cabinets business has gone to US building products group Noritek. Further disposals from the home improvement division are being lined up by Williams. Strong organic growth and the speedy integration of the bug Chubb acquisition sent shares up 22p to end at 410p. *Investment Column, page 22*

### DTI bearing down

The Department of Trade and Industry said it would refer the proposed acquisition of T&N by Federal-Mogul Corp of the US to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission unless it was given suitable undertakings to allay competition concerns. Nigel Griffiths, competition and consumer affairs minister, said the merger gave rise to competition concerns in relation to "thinwall" engine bearings. He is seeking undertakings from Federal-Mogul that it will sell all T&N's European thinwall bearings business.

### LME tackles market abuse

The London Metal Exchange issued a consultation document detailing steps already taken on greater transparency, and seeking views on solutions to market abuse. The LME set out various possible measures for tackling issue of how to intervene when there is possible market manipulation and abuse, which it classifies as market aberrations. The LME asked for views on market aberrations in October 1997 after a review by the Securities and Investments Board following the £1.6bn Sumitomo Corp copper scandal.

### London lures media group

Scottish Media Group, which owns the *Glasgow Herald* and controls two Scottish ITV franchises, is looking to increase its presence in London. The company, which recently sold its 18 per cent stake in Ulster Television after failing to get the ITV group's approval for a 240p a share bid, said it was looking at a wide range of potential deals.

### Profits of doom

The flotation of Guardian IT, which helps rescue damaged computers and keep systems running after a disaster, has attracted City interest. The company yesterday said it had raised £44.4m through a placing and employee offer which values the company at £130.5m. Guardian, which was bought out from computer giant ICL by its management for £21m in 1995, provides standby computers and alternative workplaces to companies who have suffered a disaster.

# Union plc results

*It in a year  
significant change'*

Full year 1997 £'million	Full year 1996 £'million
--------------------------------	--------------------------------

#### Gross premium income

#### Operating earnings before tax

#### Profits before tax

#### Earnings per share

#### Dividend per share

#### Notional full year dividend per share

#### Shareholders' net assets

million

up 19%, in local currency terms

results

ed by 22.4% to £49.2 billion

per share



100 Bishopgate, Norwich NR1 3NG

Address: <http://www.norwich-union.co.uk>

The annual statutory accounts (or the Summary Financial Statement) will be circulated to shareholders.

## PIA attacks 614 firms for mis-selling transgression

By Lea Paterson

**THE WATCHDOG** for the personal investment industry yesterday said he was "very disappointed" that 614 firms had appeared to fail to meet the December pensions mis-selling deadline.

Joe Palmer, chairman of the Personal Investment Authority (PIA), yesterday said the companies accounted for 4,604 cases - 2 per cent of all the most urgent cases.

The PIA required the firms it regulates to complete 90 per cent of their most urgent pension mis-selling cases - "priority one" cases - by the end of last year.

Most of the 614 firms, all independent financial advisers, appeared to have completed less than 30 per cent of their priority one cases, Mr Palmer said.

"Although they account for a relatively small number of cases, each and every investor deserves a quick and efficient conclusion to their case and should not be let down in this way," he said.

The PIA said it was investigating the apparent failures "with a view to commencing disciplinary action". The disciplinary action is expected to take the form of fines.

The news came as Norwich Union, the insurance group, said it was on track to complete virtually all 6,000 of its priority mis-selling cases by the end of April, in line with its regulatory target.

Norwich Union is among the companies unlikely to face PIA action. Richard Harvey, Norwich's chief executive, said: "We are confident we can achieve results which are satisfactory to the PIA".

The insurer yesterday also

delivered a strong set of full year figures, its first since flotation in June.

On a like-for-like basis, operating profit before tax rose 11 per cent to £62.7m. The results - which were roughly in line with City expectations - had little impact upon the shares, which closed 5p down on the day at 510p.

One analyst commented: "It was a solid set of figures. The results were very close to what we expected."

Norwich is to seek authority at its annual general meeting to buy back up to 10 per cent of its shares. However, Mr Harvey said the insurer had "no intention in the imminent future" of using this authority. He added it was simply "an option every company should have".

Mr Harvey declined to comment on whether Norwich, which is widely seen by sector watchers as a candidate for takeover, had received approaches from potential acquirers.

The Norwich chief said: "It would be inappropriate to comment on rumours. As far as acquisitions go, we've always been absolutely clear that Norwich Union regards itself as a positive acquirer who could play a useful role in consolidation." Norwich said it had sufficient spare capital to make smaller acquisitions.

Norwich announced a dividend per share of 7.75p. Its investors have seen their shares increase by about 50 per cent in value since the company converted last summer at a cost. Two key factors driving the share price rise are hopes of merger activity and the fact that many institutions are underweight in Norwich Union. More than 50 per cent of the company's shares are currently held by individuals.



## Premier shifting focus from oil to gas

By Terry Macalister

Premier Oil yesterday outlined a new strategy to transform itself from a North Sea oil company to an Asian gas group, despite the economic turmoil in emerging markets.

Charles Jamieson, chief executive, said that by the turn of the century his company would have 70 per cent of its production coming from gas rather than oil.

Mr Jamieson said much of the new focus towards Asia was already under way as Pre-

mer put increased resources into Indonesia, Burma and Pakistan. Last year Premier made four significant discoveries and took over as operator of the Anca field in Indonesia. The exploration and production company also took over as operator of the Yetagun field in Burma and signed a strategic alliance with Petromas, the Malaysian state oil company.

Mr Jamieson unveiled the new gas focus after reporting a new gas focus after reporting a 68.5m to 71.1m in the 12 months to 31 December.

Turnover rose from £138.8m to £162.2m but the company was hit by lower oil prices, particularly in the last quarter of the year. To mitigate the effects of the current oil price of below \$14 (£8.50) per barrel, Premier has hedged 25 per cent of its production at \$18 per barrel during the first half of the year.

Cash flow rose 45 per cent to £90.5m and the dividend was hiked 10 per cent to 6.6p per share.

## Connex set to slam door on ancient carriages

By Randeep Ramesh  
Transport Correspondent

Connex South Central, the French-owned company which runs commuter services in London, said yesterday it would make "a significant investment" in rolling stock as part of its franchise.

Connex is unique among rail companies in having an option to extend the franchise written into its original contract with the Government. Geoff Harrison Mee, the company's managing director, said Connex's 300 four-carriage ancient "slam door" rolling stock could be completely replaced as part of the deal.

Mr Harrison Mee made his comments at the unveiling of a train, the Adtranz Classic. This uses an old-style slam-door carriage frame to which a more crash-resistant top has been added and would only cost half the price of a new train.

Adtranz also say that the Classic can be in service about nine months after being ordered - vital for those operators looking to replace slam-door car-

riages. One problem for prospective buyers, identified by Mr Harrison Mee, is the lack of air-conditioning on the new Classic. "It would certainly not be able to replace all our stock," he added.

But there are some obvious advantages. For train companies worried about overcrowding, the new train can offer up to 30 per cent more seats than older stock. Connex has a good track record in investing in rolling stock. Last year Adtranz supplied 30 new trains to Connex for £150m.

"It is time the railway industry was able to demonstrate not only its commitment to providing high-quality services for customers, but also its commitment to good quality design and safe products," said Labour MP Gwyneth Dunwoody, whose constituency of Crewe and Nantwich is home to one of Adtranz's plants. Mrs Dunwoody, chairwoman of the House of Commons Transport Committee, added: "People deserve good quality railways and to be able to travel in speed, comfort and safety."

	Turnover £m	Pre-tax £m	EPS	Dividend
William Blair (F)	500.4m (507.2m)	33.4m (+4.1m)	19.4p (+4.5p)	10.3p (10.35p)
Wilk Group (F)	1.18bn (1.10bn)	154.3m (141.7m)	22.7p (23.9p)	8.0p (7.80)
BPFT (F)	76.0bn (73.4bn)	8.04m (9.7m)	17.7p (22.2p)	16.0p (12.05)
Westnet (F)	134.0m (140.1m)	8.31m (10.80m)	8.8p (8.10)	3.5p
Corus (F)	9.1m (4.3m)	-9.1m (-4.3m)	-5.0p (-3.0p)	
CNC (F)	12.7m (10.57m)	0.923m (0.974m)	8.72p (5.91p)	
West Delta & Rosenthal (F)	8.71m (8.42m)	-0.828m (-1.73m)	-1.59p (-3.45p)	
Independent Resources (F)	-	65.0m (68.2m)	96.8p (96.2p)	18.0p (12.20p)
JIT Wetherspoon (F)	50.03m (54.57m)	11.06m (8.12m)	5.5p (4.10)	0.75p (0.80p)
Kelvin Group (F)	472.1m (524.7m)	45.16m (10.32m)	7.4p (3.14p)	5.2p
Miller Group (F)	241.1m (234.7m)	19.2m (12.5m)	15.6p (13.0p)	8.4p
Lambert Electronics (F)	109.6m (98.3m)	4.58m (2.23m)	21.1p (11.8p)	5.5p (7.50)
Marshall Industries (F)	-	752.0m (628.0m)	25.25 (11.0p)	11.2p (10.20)
Preston Group (F)	31.0m (20.0m)	1.27m (0.18m)	5.5p (1.40)	1.25p
Prima People (F)	-	0.244m (0.127m)	0.94p (0.35p)	
PSG Group (F)	82.2m (85.2m)	8.18m (4.84m)	26.0p (18.3p)	8.4p
Undercover (F)	95.0m (7.2m)	81.76m (7.54m)	11.25p (10.00)	3.0p
Wedow (F)	148.6m (123.3m)	25.3m (18.4m)	7.2p (3.40)	1.25p (1.20)
Wickes (F)	126.5m (117.4m)	8.11m (5.90)	11.2p (10.10)	4.5p (4.10)
Wickes Home (F)	187.0m (127.0m)	41.2m (28.0m)	46.4p (31.0p)	22.5p (18.70)
Wilk Group (F)	304.8m (301.8m)	18.5m (13.4m)	18.0p (12.20)	3.5p
Wimpey (F)	301.2m (308.0m)	8.08m (8.90)	7.2p (5.50)	2.7p
Thorntons (F)	80.0m (85.5m)	31.4m (30.04m)	11.7p (11.55p)	1.0p (1.05p)
United Cellars (F)	123.0m (138.0m)	2.127m (2.074m)	8.7p (5.30p)	3.0p (3.40)
Waterford Wedgwood (F)	194.17m (197.0m)	18.12m (14.83m)	8.08p (4.00p)	1.40p (1.40)
Wills (F)	2.25m (1.62m)	254.0m (40.2m)	78.0p (38.1p)	15.0p (15.10)
WSP Group (F)	49.00m (28.13m)	3.28m (2.50m)	7.2p (5.40p)	2.60p (2.40)
Wyerside Gardner (F)	83.0m (54.77m)	9.12m (7.00m)	15.0p (13.0p)	8.00p (8.10p)
F7 - Final (F)	-	-	-	-

**THE NATIONWIDE** Building Society is girding itself for another assault by carpetbaggers seeking election to its board, as the agm in mid-July hoves into view.

Last year Michael Hardern, a self-employed butler and self-proclaimed king of the carpetbaggers, ran for election to the board on a platform of immediate demutualisation and windfall payouts for the Nationwide's 8 million-odd members.

In the event Mr Hardern lost by a margin which would have made even Michael Portillo blush, and Brian Davis, the Society's bespectacled chief executive, was able to declare a famous victory for the forces of mutuality.

This year the Nationwide is facing a much more serious threat. The carpetbaggers' new candidate is Andrew Muir, a recruitment consultant from Slough. Mr Muir wants the Nationwide to pay all its members a £500 handout, and he doesn't mind whether it demutualises to do so or merely pays it out of reserves.

A spokesman for the Nationwide acknowledges that they have received Mr Muir's nomination, along with the required 50 signatures from existing Nationwide members.

Help may be at hand, however, in the unlikely form of Mr Hardern. The butler has just decided he's going to run for the Board as well as Mr Muir, thus threatening to split the carpetbagger vote.

Mr Hardern cheerily admits: "I've got a snowball's chance of getting in. Last year I thought I was a dead cert, so it would be lovely to be equally wrong this time around."

Nationwide itself is maintaining radio silence over Mr Hardern's potentially beneficial candidature. There again, the Society might see its own vote split. A spokesman tells me a number of customers want to stand on a pro-mutualism platform.

If you feel like throwing your own hat into the ring, nominations have to be in by 4 April.

**PREMIER OIL** announced its first set of full year results yesterday following the recent retirement of Sir Barrie Stephens, 70, who has jetted off to his home in Florida to enjoy the sun.

His successor David John, who is also non-executive chairman of The BOC Group and a non-exec at British Biotech, presented a good set of figures. Which didn't stop the market marking Premier's shares down 8 per cent.

There again, the oil industry has always had a turbulent relationship with City analysts, with the moguls suspecting that the teenage scribblers don't really understand the world of Black Gold.

Just last week Pierre Gangley, chief executive of Enterprise Oil, said to journalists as he started his own annual results presentation: "I hope you ask some better questions than the analysis."

Lars Andersen has joined Cavendish Corporate Finance, a corporate disposals boutique based in London, to head up the firm's IT sales division. Mr Andersen's impressive CV says: "He speaks French, German, Norwegian, Swedish and Danish."

I still think his lack of English may be a problem in London.

## THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

### Upbeat Williams calms the City

ALARM bells finally stopped ringing yesterday at Williams, the fire protection and security group. Bears had been worried about problems inside Chubb, which was acquired by Williams for a steep rise of £1.3bn last year.

Critics were also raised concerns about Williams' exposure to trading woes in South-east Asia. This had helped to depress the share price but upbeat results yesterday brought out the bulls.

Williams said Chubb was on line to deliver £40m of performance improvement benefits by the end of this year while the tiger economies accounted for only 4 per cent of its sales. Williams' stock rose another 22p to 410p yesterday after a similar rise the day before.

The positive response from the City was also generated by better than expected group profits plus confirmation, finally, that the home improvements division was up for sale.

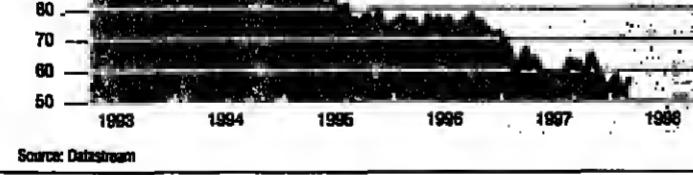
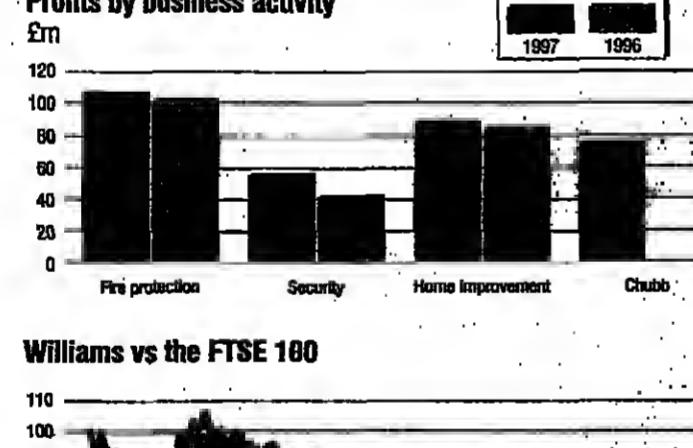
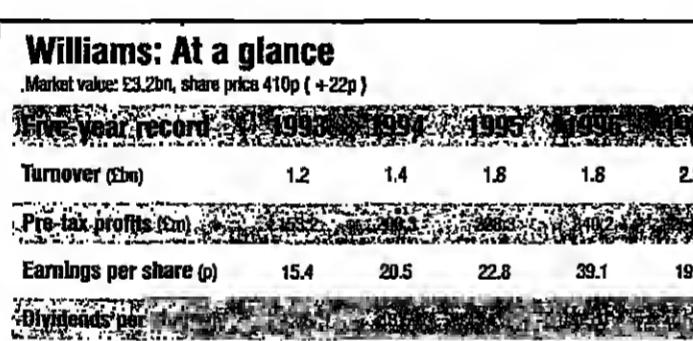
Demonstrating this further commitment to further focus activities, Williams announced details of a £342.5m (£1.48m) cash disposal of its US door chimes and bathroom cabinet business. Analysts say Williams could raise another £80m by offing off its home improvement division which takes in household names like Polyflora, Polycell and Hammerite. The group insists there will be no rush, pointing out that sales from this division have been increasing on the back of strong demand in the US and expansion into Eastern Europe. But there is no interest in second division activities. Future strategy is to concentrate on fire and security where Williams can claim to be global market leaders.

Group pre-tax profits fell from £340.2m to £254.9m but analysis had their eyes on underlying earnings. This showed a rise from £238.5m to £285.1m in 1997, higher than many had predicted.

Turnover increased from £1.8bn to £2.1bn while the dividend was increased 5 per cent to 15.8p. Management said the bigger pay out was justified by confidence in the growth prospects for the group which has already seen sales rising strongly in the first months of 1998.

Roger Carr, the chief executive, said the proceeds of forthcoming disposals will be used in the interests of shareholder value. That could mean acquisitions, but more likely share buybacks. Williams hinted at the possibility of buying back at least 10 per cent of its shares.

Analysts at Pannier Gordon expect Williams to produce a pre-tax profit of



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23/SHARES

THE INDEPENDENT  
WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH 1998  
23

## Double insurance strike rumours send shares soaring

### MARKET REPORT



DEREK PAIN

Insurance shares mesmerised the stock market. Rumours swirled that an overseas group planned to barge into the county £15bn merger arranged between Commercial Union and General Accident.

CU shot ahead 62p to 1,120p; GenAcc jumped 57p to 1,380p.

The rumour - astonishing even by the often outrageous standards of the market - suggested that a predator was about to block the merger by pouncing on the two insurance groups.

Idea, it was said, was the creation of the world's biggest insurance group. A theory supporting the take over was that CU had rushed into the arms of GenAcc in order to avoid a hostile overseas strike. Now the thwarted predator was preparing its revenge with a double cash bid which would have to be in the region of £16bn.

Possible bidders with such a hoard of ammunition are few

and far between. A couple of insurers and, of course, a clutch of banks.

There has for long been talk of a major clearing or mortgage bank descending on an insurance group. Such a strike would make sense for, say, Barclays or Lloyds TSB.

But it was the rumours of

an overseas assault which caused the excitement. Although two giant mergers - Giro Wellingham and Smithkline Beecham and Reed Elsevier and Wolters Kluwer have crashed - the market remains on alert, convinced the round of big corporate adventures is far from over.

Regulators are getting more and more inquisitive but Diageo, which has emerged as the world's biggest spirits group without enduring too much hardship, is put forward as an example of official tolerance.

Footsie ended 9.5 points higher at 5,828.5p. The mid and small cap indices also achieved record highs.

Williams, which announced

mood to allow this particular gravy train to be shunted into the sidings.

The CU/GenAcc story brushed other insurers with GRS up 22p to 458p; Royal Sun Alliance 27p to 808p and Prudential Corporation 10p to 934p. London & Manchester put up 10p to 569p.

The financial sector made a major contribution to Footsie's push to a new peak. Schroders, ahead of results, gained 95p to 2,395p. The figures are expected to be impressive but in these bid happy days there is a feeling they may be accompanied by some form of corporate action, such as a deal with Morgan Stanley.

Halifax, on its Birmingham Midshires guamping, firms 17p to 942p. Positive noises from HSBC Securities helped the banking sector.

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Williams, which announced

the sale of the Nu-Tec building materials business with its results, gained 22p to 410p but BTR, strong with Williams on Moody, fell 16.75p to 192.25p.

Dixons, due to be removed today from Footsie, fell 22p to 490p. Finance director Robert Schrager denied a profits warning was planned. Kingfisher rose 33p to 1,030p with SG Securities suggesting the shares would reach 1,100p.

Carlton Communications added 17.75p to 454.75p with

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## Bookmakers windy about Blowing

### Racing

By Greg Wood

**PUNTERS** are often dubious about just how much money the bookies have taken when a horse shortens in an ante-post list, but the whole process reached its logical – if somewhat bizarre – conclusion yesterday when the odds against a runner in Saturday's Imperial Cup at Sandown were cut almost in half, even though the bookmaker in question had not laid a single penny for it.

The horse in question was Blowing Wind, trained by Martin Pipe, who was an 8-1 chance in the first list issued by William Hill yesterday, with the book due to open this morning. On a subsequent press release, it even seemed that he had drifted out to 10-1, but by yesterday

evening, he was down to 9-2, after the firm's odds-setters had a long second look at the race.

Coral cut Blowing Wind to 4-1 yesterday after *initially* quoting him at 6-1.

Punters may complain that if a firm takes a view, it should stand by it and lay it, if only for five minutes, although it is hard to see how it ever came up with their original price. Pipe's record in the Imperial Cup is outstanding, and he is also the only trainer to have claimed the £20,000 bonus put up by Sandown, the race sponsors, every year for a horse which can win the Imperial and then any race at the Cheltenham Festival the following week.

Blowing Wind is clearly being targeted at the same lucrative double, and will be ridden by Tony McCoy, the champion jockey. The best price against

Blowing Wind this morning is 7-1 with the Totie, but that too is unlikely to survive the first frantic seconds of trading.

Pipe will also go to the Festival with a predictably strong team – one of his horses, Tamarindo, is entered in no fewer than eight of the meeting's 20 races, and would no doubt be in the other 12 if he were qualified. In the Gold Cup, a race which has so far eluded him, he will be represented by Cyborg and Challenger Du Lac, but the strength of the challenge facing his runners increased yesterday when it was confirmed that Sun Bay, the Hennessy Gold Cup winner, will take his place in the field a week tomorrow.

Charlie Brooks, his trainer, will also be two-handed, with Couldnt Be Better, who was third behind Imperial Call two seasons ago, also expected to take part following a useful piece of work with Sun Bay on Monday. Sun Bay is best priced at 11-1 for the Gold Cup with William Hill, while Couldnt Be Better is among the outsiders at 66-1.

At the other end of the market, See More Business and Dorans Pride are disputing favourability, although it is still not certain that Gordon Richards' chaser will shake off the effects of a virus in time to line up for the race.

"He's schooled over three fences this morning and done three little bits of work," Nicky Richards, the trainer's son, said, "but whether he gets to Cheltenham or not is still another matter." Punters will thus be waiting for the 10-1 against The Grey Monk which is offered by Ladbrokes.

Ladbrokes takeover of Coral likely to be referred to Monopolies & Mergers Commission, page 20

### Carlisle card under threat

**PROSPECTS** for tomorrow's meeting at Carlisle have deteriorated and the course will hold an inspection at 4.30 today.

The course has been water-logged after heavy rain and snow and clerk of the course Jonnie Fenwick-Clelland, who walked the track yesterday af-

**RICHARD EDMONDSON**  
NAP: Mr Busker  
(Bangor-On-Dee 4.20)  
NB: Elton Ledger  
(Southwell 4.10)

ternoon, reported the going as heavy, soft in places.

• Fiddlers Pike, the oldest horse to run this season, has been retired. Rosemary Henderson's 17-year-old was fifth in the 1994 Grand National. Henderson said: "He's off team chasing on Sunday and is also going eventing."

### Results

#### EXETER

2.20: 1. LEBLANCK (M Griffiths) 14-1; 2. GOODFELLOW (D) 13-1; 3. Dalesman 11-4; 4. 7 m. 7 m. Dan (Mrs O McCartha) 14-1; 5. 7 m. Dan (Mrs O McCartha) 14-1; 6. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 7. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 8. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 9. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 10. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 11. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 12. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 13. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 14. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 15. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 16. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 17. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 18. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 19. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 20. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 21. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 22. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 23. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 24. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 25. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 26. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 27. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 28. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 29. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 30. 7 m. Dan (M. Thompson) 14-1; 31. 7 m. Dan (M. 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# Graham sees future among big spenders

Defeat in the FA Cup last Saturday has highlighted Leeds' need for new players. Phil Shaw reports

THE SCENE is the Leeds United dressing-room around 5pm on Saturday, shortly after they were dumped out of the FA Cup by Wolves. George Graham walks round, telling each player in turn what he thought of their display – which, with few exceptions, was not much – before admitting he had also made mistakes.

Leeds' latest home defeat by modest First Division opposition in knock-out competition, their third in the 18 months since Graham succeeded Howard Wilkinson as manager, leaves another season in danger of disintegrating into disappointment and retribution at Elland Road.

The Premiership table, in which Leeds stand seventh compared with finishes of 14th and 11th in the previous two years, is testimony to the improvement Graham has effected. But they go into tonight's visit by Blackburn Rovers with only three wins from 12 League matches. The natives who Alex Ferguson dubbed Europe's most intimidating crowd – though that was before the advent of the all-seater stadium – are restless.

As long as Leeds were still in the Cup, the disparity between expectations and achievements did not seem too wide. The man-

ager's column in Saturday's programme was, with hindsight, strewn with famous last words. "We are not far away," said one, referring to the kind of team Graham wants. Another anticipated "a bright future". A third spoke of a "selection headache" I'd love to have every week".

Afterwards, in attempting to explain the setback to reporters, Graham posed a rhetorical question: "How can you legislate for so many people failing to play to their potential at the same time?"

Perhaps, however, it was not merely a case of players under-achieving, but of their lacking genuine quality to the first place. Graham inherited a side in serious decline. Almost all of the 1992 championship squad had gone, replaced by a mixture of cheap buys and free transfers, youth team products and expensive foreigners.

Having cleared out high earners such as Yeboah, Brolin, Dorigo, Palmer and Rush, as well as the home-grown likes of Fard, Couzens and Tinkler, Graham set about building his own team. He has bought almost exclusively at the lower-to-mid-end of the market; five of his 10 recruits have been for £50,000 or less, with only David

Hopkin, at £250, costing more than £2m. Despite having questioned the success rate of overseas imports, he has yet to sign a single English player.

The squad is long on spirit, honesty and organisation, as evinced by their ability to fight back to win after being two and even three goals down. They outstripped last season's meagre goal tally by new year, possess an away record second only to Manchester United's and could still qualify for the UEFA Cup.

Unfortunately, endeavour can take you only so far, and Leeds remain bereft of class in vital areas. The most pressing need is for a natural finisher in the mould of Tony Yeboah or Ian Wright, who Graham bought for Arsenal, and for a

creative midfielder to vary the speed and angles of attack in the way Gary McAllister did during Wilkinson's *annus mirabilis*.

Part of the attraction of Leeds for Graham was the fact that they had recently been taken over by a London-based leisure group, Caspian. The company had grandiose plans to tap their undoubtedly potential in a large, once-city club and, apparently, the resources with which to do it.

In reality, Leeds have not re-

motely competed with, for example, Chelsea, and have also been outspent by clubs such as Coventry and Sheffield Wednesday.

Even before the Wolves fiasco, Graham was telling journalists he now needed to spend "big-time". The team, he said, was like an incomplete jigsaw

puzzle. The missing pieces would not come cheaply.

Although Graham is not one to wave his chequebook around before the transfer deadline, which falls on 26 March, he will expect to have the requisite funds in place for a summer spree. Scrimping along is not his style. While he will not want to leave Yorkshire without proving a point after his enforced exile, he may not be inclined to stay if he senses his vision is not shared by the club's owners.

The Leeds chairman, Peter Ridsdale, insisted yesterday that there was no rift with Graham over transfer cash. "We have also outlined to him that if he comes to us and asks for sensible amounts of money – and he has already told us of the

players he is after – then it will be made available for him to buy them," Ridsdale said.

There is, of course, a third strand to team-building, apart from buying at the middle and top end of the market. Wilkinson's legacy in terms of senior players may have left something to be desired, but the youth policy he set up could be about to furnish Leeds with a handful of classy additions to what is one of the Premiership's smallest squads.

The Leeds team which won the FA Youth Cup against Manchester United five years ago is now scattered around the lower divisions, whereas Nicky Butt, David Beckham and the Nevilles became internationals. The latest crop, who hold the game were 21 or under.

As a student of football history, Graham is aware of how Doo Revit built Leeds from a mediocre provincial club to a European power with a team who broke through from the juniors together. Although teenagers like Jonathan Woodgate, Lee Matthews, Stephen McPhail and Matthew Jones may soon join the Australian prodigy Harry Kewell in his side, it is financial clout that is likely to determine whether Graham stays to see them grow.

No one, however, can satisfy everyone.

Nonetheless, Mr Lambert said the organisers of *France '98* had decided to bow to pressure from the EU, which declared the original system of ticket allocation to be unfair under European competition laws. There are 160,000 tickets for individual first-stage matches reserved for French fans but not yet allocated. Some of these – it is not clear how many – will now be given to national federations to boost their otherwise meagre allowance (only 9,000 or so seats for English fans, for all three first-round matches). The rest will be placed on public sale, under new procedures which have still to be decided.

Not all World Cup coaches relish the choice of having only two goalkeepers in their 22-strong squads with a third on standby in case of injury, as was announced on Monday. Sepp Blatter, Fifa's general secretary, does not recommend the new ruling either. "If one of your goalkeepers is sent off and suspended you are left with only one for the next match," he said.

He told a news conference at the close of Fifa's World Cup workshop in Paris yesterday that a third goalkeeper would not be allowed in France awaiting a possible call.

Italy's Cesare Maldini said he would be bringing three goalkeepers to the finals. Maldini said it was unthinkable to have one goalkeeper training alone and out of touch with the squad. "He will land out of the blue like a parachutist [if he's called in]," Maldini said.

Fifa confirmed yesterday that tackling from behind will become an automatic red card offence from the World Cup onwards and that referees will indicate to the team benches how much injury time they will be adding on to regular time.

Players testing positive for recreational drugs such as cannabis or marijuana at the World Cup finals will be kicked out of the tournament, Blatter said. "You can call them recreational, but they're still drugs. And they will be banned," he said.

George Graham, the Leeds manager, has not signed a single English player for the Yorkshire club

Photograph: Ben Radford/Alisport

George Graham, the Leeds manager, has not signed a single English player for the Yorkshire club

Photograph: Ben Radford/Alisport

## Lower divisions ready to assert rights

By Mark Bradley

LOWER DIVISION chairmen are determined to block radical proposals that would give First Division clubs more autonomy – laying bare the widening split between rich and poor within the Football League.

The chairmen of clubs in the Second and Third Divisions will formulate their own compromise plan over the next couple of weeks, which they hope the leading sides will agree to. But if it comes to it, they will vote down the First Division clubs' existing proposals and are likely to take legal action if they try to form a breakaway group before the current television deal runs out in three years' time.

Representatives of the 24 teams in the First Division outlined their proposals at a meeting of their lower division counterparts in Luton on Monday. They want the power to negotiate the League's next TV deal, build bridges with the Premier League, have control over marketing and commercial activities such as finding a sponsor for the division, and virtually govern their own affairs – while staying within the League structure.

Any extra money they raise would be shared out between all 72 League clubs, but the top sides want an increasingly greater share as the pot expands because they are worried about the huge gulf which exists between the Premier League and the

Second and Third Divisions.

John Reames, the chairman of Lincoln City, who has been appointed as spokesman for the lower division clubs, said: "No one is prepared to accept

the Football League. Not surprisingly the Second and Third Division clubs have hatched out their own plans about the financial implications of the proposals, with some clubs warning that they could lead to smaller outlays going out of business.

They have even greater concerns about handing over power on issues such as promotion and relegation, with the proposals giving top clubs the authority to decide how many teams there should be in the First Division and how many sides are promoted to the Premiership each season.

A committee set up by the Professional Footballers' Association to sort out the row over alleged racist remarks made by Liverpool's Steve Harkess and ordered its own inquiry.

The FA has also reacted to a similar alleged incident between Scarborough's Andy Rhodes and Cambridge's Trevor Benjamin in a Third Division match on 10 January.

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attempts by the Professional

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## FA probes racism row

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## Klinsmann backed by Ferdinand

THE turbulent internal politics at Tottenham took a fresh twist yesterday when the club's £6m striker, Les Ferdinand, sided with his attacking partner, Jürgen Klinsmann, in the unseemly public row over the best role for David Ginola.

Klinsmann has been at odds with the team which won the FA Youth Cup against Manchester United five years ago is now scattered around the lower divisions, whereas Nicky Butt, David Beckham and the Nevilles became internationals. The latest crop, who hold the

supply to the front men."

Ferdinand said he felt Klinsmann was acting in the best interests of the team and that it was not his intention to cause disruption during a relegation battle. "I am sure that Jürgen was acting as a result of his own frustration and would not want to upset the team just for the sake of his own personal gain," he said.

"Like he said, the coach has his ideas about how we are going to play games and what teams are going to win games."

"We are all professional and although people may not agree with team selections at times, we know we have got a relegation battle on our hands and that is what we have got to sort out."

"One of the frustrating things for Jürgen is that he hasn't been able to form a partnership with any of the other strikers," Ferdinand added.

"I haven't had a chance to form a partnership with him yet but I have started training again and hope to be back in the fold next week."

Tottenham, meanwhile, have appointed the former Notts

County manager and coach to

the Vietnam national side,

Colin Murphy, as their new

youth academy director.

*Wednesday's Football CUP semi-final between Derby and Plymouth on 4 or 5 April.*

*Also playing: Manchester United v Arsenal, Sunday; Derby v Luton, Saturday.*

*Also playing (not on tap): Luton v*

*Derby, Saturday; Plymouth v*

*Derby, Sunday; Luton v*

*Derby, Saturday; Plymouth v*

*Derby, Sunday; Luton v*

*Derby, Saturday; Luton v</*

# Mannix decides to leave Sale

## Rugby Union

**SALE** have put their New Zealand outside-half Simon Mannix on the transfer list after a disagreement. The 26-year-old goalkicker, who becomes eligible to play for England in 1999, has almost certainly played his last game for the Manchester club, who meet Wasps in the Tetley's Cup semi-finals later this month.

Mannix, whose stand-off place in the side for last night's Allied Dunbar Premiership match at Newcastle was taken by his compatriot, Shane Howarth, has been a key figure is Sale's success over the last two years.

He helped them to the Pilkington Cup final last May and was in the side that beat West Hartlepool last month to take them closer to a return to Twickenham.

Sale's chief executive, Howard Thomas, said: "Simon Mannix is a top-class player. Unfortunately, there are certain issues over which he and the rugby management could not agree."

The move is certain to alert a number of leading clubs, with

Saracens expected to lead the way. They need a replacement for outside-half Michael Lynch, who retires at the end of the season.

Mannix said: "It is a shame I'll be leaving because I have enjoyed my time playing rugby in the North-West and my family and I were made to feel very welcome by both the club and its supporters. I wish the club every success in the future."

Wasps' rugby director, Nigel Melville, yesterday challenged the "Judas" by a handful of the crowd at Saracens last Sunday and he can expect more of the same from occupants of King'sholm's Shed tonight, when the champions visit Gloucester.

Gloucester - who have won six of their last seven home League games, but have beaten Wasps only three times in 15 meetings - and Wasps both restore international threequarters after long-term groin injuries.

Philippe Saint-André, the former France captain, returns for Gloucester after having one short outing in January, also against Wasps, when he suffered a recurrence of his November problem.

Richard Hill, Gloucester's rugby director, said: "Philippe has been struggling for four months and we were not going to rush him after the setback in January."

The Ireland centre Rob Henderson is back in Wasps' midfield for the first time since December, having confirmed his recovery in Paris last Saturday.

Henderson's recall means that Nick Greenstock moves to the wing, while Wasps also start with hooker Trevor Leota and back-row forward Johnny Ions.

## Keighley call on Crooks as coach

## Rugby League

By Dave Madfield

**KEIGHLEY** have replaced their coach, John Kain, four matches into the First Division season, paving the way for the return to the game of Lee Crooks. The former Great Britain forward is set to be named today as the new boss of a team without a League win this year.

Crooks has been out of the game since his contract as an assistant coach at Castleford expired at the end of last season: he had retired as a player midway through the campaign.

Crooks has been desperate to get his start in coaching, but last night mouth turned down an offer from the ambitious amateur club, the Oxford Cavaliers, to coach them on a part-time basis, in the hope that a full-time role would crop up elsewhere.

He now appears to have beaten John Joyner, who was replaced as Castleford coach last year, for the difficult job of reviving Keighley, whose recent financial crises have weakened their playing staff to the point where they are struggling to compete in the First Division. Kain is likely to stay at Keighley in some capacity.

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A five-match tour by New Zealand will bring

## Rangers to let £3m Gascoigne go

### Football

By Mark Pierson

PAUL GASCOIGNE'S days at Rangers were looking numbered last night after the Scottish champions agreed to sell their England midfielder to Crystal Palace for £3m.

Although the deal is far from done and Gascoigne himself has not even talked to Palace yet, it is clear that Dick Advocaat, who will take over from Walter Smith as Rangers manager in the summer, does not see him as part of his plans.

The proposed transfer has been agreed with Mark Goldberg, Palace's prospective new owner, who believes Gascoigne and Terry Venables, his former manager with Tottenham and England, can play major roles in the south London club's future.

Goldberg, who has an agreement to buy Palace by the end of the year provided he can raise the required £30m, yesterday gave Venables more time to think over an offer to become manager. However, he said that the signing of Gascoigne was not necessarily dependent on Venables' decision.

Goldberg has long been an admirer of Gascoigne - Palace's interest in him was first revealed in *The Independent* last October - and plans to meet the player early next week to discuss the move.

However, the prospect of joining a club currently bottom of the Premiership may have limited appeal for Gascoigne, who is currently out injured with a calf injury. Playing for a team embroiled in a relegation battle and without a home League win all season is not likely to help his preparations for this summer's World Cup.

Mel Stein, Gascoigne's advisor, last night played down talk of a move to Palace. "They may well have agreed a price in principle, but certainly Paul hasn't agreed to anything whatsoever," he said.

"Paul's view is that he simply wants to get himself fit first before he focuses on anything and at the moment he's very much a Rangers player. He's made no firm decision to leave Rangers, and certainly won't be making a firm decision to leave Rangers to go anywhere until he's fit. And that's going to be at least a week or so."

Rangers have agreed a fee of £3m, with further cash based on appearances. However, if the deal goes through it could cost Palace some £9m. Gascoigne agreed a new contract with Rangers last summer believed to be worth £40,000 per week over three years. A similar deal with Palace would commit the club to £6m in wages plus the fee.

Bearing in mind Gascoigne's poor fitness record - and the fact that Palace's prospects of Premiership survival this season have been hit hard by the lengthy absences of other injury-prone big-money signings -

there will be many who will question the wisdom of the move. Goldberg and Ron Noades, the Palace chairman, have been at odds over the future direction of the club and it was not clear last night whether Noades and the current manager, Steve Coppell, approve of the Gascoigne deal.

Noades had previously insisted that Goldberg himself should largely fund the move for Venables, whose contract as coach of Australia expires this summer.

"I believe that with at least one more meeting, and possibly two, I will be able to persuade



Gascoigne: Palace interest

Terry to join us," Goldberg said. "I do not want to rush him into making a decision and end up with him saying no. We are making progress all the time."

Graham aims to join the big spenders, page 26



Pitch battler: England play Barbados alongside the stretch of prepared ground where they will face the West Indies in the fifth Test, which starts tomorrow. It promises to be the best batting pitch of the series

Photograph: David Ashdown

## Spicy pitches prove scary for tourists seeking edge

IN CRICKET nothing is more raked over, analysed, verbally dissected, generally worried about than the 22 yards of prepared turf known as the pitch. But whether they are fast or slow, bouncy or low, spin or seam, pitches are a glorious uncertainty over which only the very best tend to have regular dominion.

Which is why the West Indies have risked playing England on helpful pitches, backing players such as Brian Lara, Curtly Ambrose and Courtney Walsh to outperform England's key players, a ploy that has seen them go 2-1 up in the series with two Tests to play.

One of the great myths about the Caribbean is that the pitches are fast and boun-

cy: in fact apart from Barbados - venue for the fifth Test tomorrow - the opposite is true, and most tend to be sluggish, the ball bouncing less evenly as the game wears on.

This tendency, especially after their bowlers' poor showing in Pakistan, left the West Indies with a dilemma. With two ageing but accurate fast bowlers, and a largely untried crop of young quicks, there was no point in baving the slow, flat, bland pitches that brought three draws against India last year.

Instead, knowing that Ambrose is still one of the best bowlers in the world when there is something for him in the pitch and that Walsh is not far behind, the surfaces have been under prepared. Although in the

case of the first match in Trinidad, this was more from force of circumstance - after the first Test was abandoned - than by design.

Playing on spicy pitches has been a bold play and one that could so easily have backfired had England won the first - as they indeed should have done - as well as the second Test in Port of Spain. As it was, both teams left with a win apiece, with Ambrose and Angus Fraser, both written off in the months before the tour, reborn as match-winners.

In Guyana, however, the West Indies got the conditions just right. In Trinidad, the grass on the pitches had produced both lateral as well as vertical movement. But while this assisted Fras-

er as much as Ambrose and Walsh, the cracks and broken top of the Bourda pitch helped mainly the West Indies pair.

It is a variation at which local tall fast bowlers, with their extra height and pace, excel far more than their English counterparts, who cannot drive the batsmen on to the back foot often enough to gain advantage. Even when conditions are dusty, the home bowlers are far more effective than spinners, who, despite the occasional turning wicket, have rarely excelled in the Caribbean.

score now, the tourists will have been delighted at the gritty tussles between bat and ball so far seen in the series.

For those who would rather see runs than results, however, the pitches have been nothing short of bowlers' paradises. Unsurprisingly, it is a view that does not hold much truck with bowlers, and speaking about the strip England had just played Barbados on - a game that barely went into a third innings - a watching Fraser said: "People tell me that it's a good pitch. Well if it is, it has produced a dull game."

So far the batting, apart from Lara's glorious 93 in the last Test, has been anything but free-flowing. But if the popular conception of cricket is that people want to see batsman

would benefit from better conditions, England's chances of winning the series will not.

The trouble is, now that they have got their noses in front, the West Indies are bound to risk less on the pitches than they have done over the last few games. It is an irony that will not escape the openers, Stuart Williams and Sherwin Campbell. They were both dropped by the West Indies for the Barbados Test, a venue that will probably provide the best batting pitch of the series.

Yet if those selected in their place, the Barbadian Philo Wallace and Guyanese Clayton

Lambert, are perhaps fortunate to have missed batting on the earlier pitches, cream still

has a habit of rising to the top.

Like it or not, the best batsmen on either side have all played significant innings with Lara and Alec Stewart outstanding.

But if many would cherish seeing Stewart repeat his feat of four years ago when he scored a century in each

innings, England's real chance lies in taking 20 West Indian wickets. If the Kensington Oval track is as good as local opinion suggests, that may be rather trickier than in previous Tests in the series.

## McGeechan breaks through impasse

### Rugby Union

By Chris Hewett

KEITH BARWELL, the big bad wolf of Northampton, was enjoying life on the piste yesterday, which was quite a coincidence given that his club has spent the last week and a half careering down the slippery slope to public humiliation. In the absence of his multi-millionaire boss, Ian McGeechan took the only sane decision open to him and unilaterally called time on the political squabble that has reduced English rugby to a laughing stock.

McGeechan, one of the most respected coaches in the world game, intervened on behalf of Paul Grayson, Tim Rodber and Matt Dawson, the Saints internationals at the centre of the latest spat between club and country. Unless Barwell decides otherwise from his temporary lair in the French Alps, the Franklins Three will make themselves available for this summer's tour of the southern hemisphere and save Clive Woodward, the England coach, the trouble of dropping them from the remaining Five Nations matches with Scotland and Ireland.

"Clive has said he will not pick anyone unwilling to tour and as we as a club are not prepared to allow our players to be isolated in this matter,"

to sort itself out, there was no escaping the fact that the entire England squad had signed up for the tour. His precipitate action left Grayson and company in the mire and pushed the clubs into a corner they would much rather have avoided. In short, he handed the RFU a public relations triumph on a plate.

McGeechan tried his level best to defend Barwell yesterday, saying: "Keith wanted to make the point that the players' interests were not being properly looked after and his sole purpose was to create a basis for discussion. Clive himself has admitted that this summer's tour is far from ideal." However, Northampton sources indicated that the coach was flabbergasted by the militancy of Barwell's stand and decided that if the owner was unwilling to break the impasse, he would have to do so himself.

Several club managements, Bath and Saracens included, were holding meetings with their players yesterday to appraise them of the latest political situation. "Northampton's climb-down means this particular issue is done and dusted," said one director of rugby.

"There will be other issues, though. The next big fight will be over next season's England contracts, which will be put to the players in September."

Rugby union, page 27

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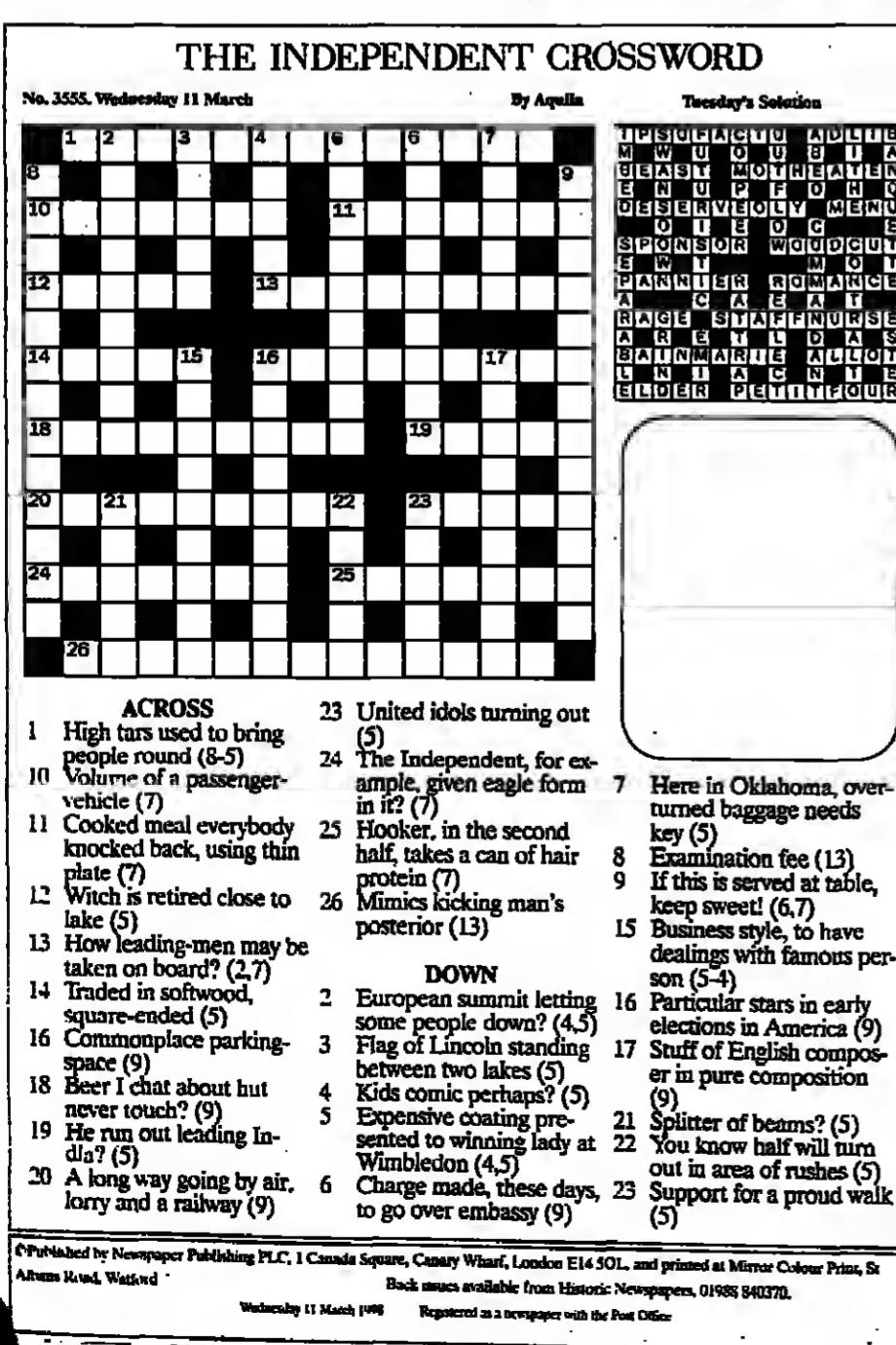
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